

Mahabharata-24

THE TWELFTH YEAR

O HOLY ONE, WHAT DID THE SONS OF PANDU DO AFTER THEY HAD FREED DURYODHANA IN THE DWAITAVANA?

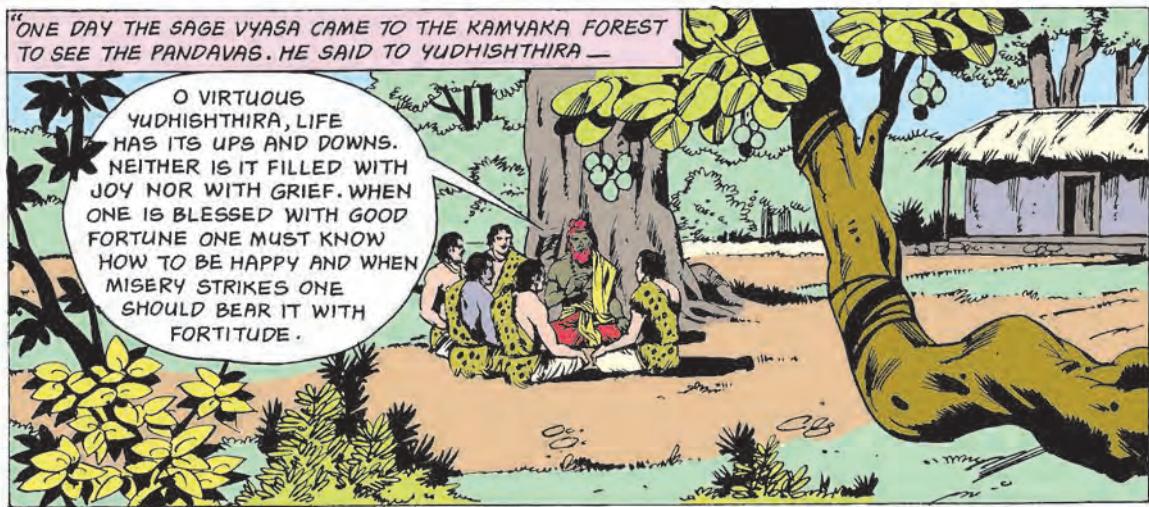
THE PANDAVAS, O MONARCH, THEN PROCEEDED TO THE KAMYAKA FOREST WHERE THERE WAS AN ABUNDANCE OF GAME.

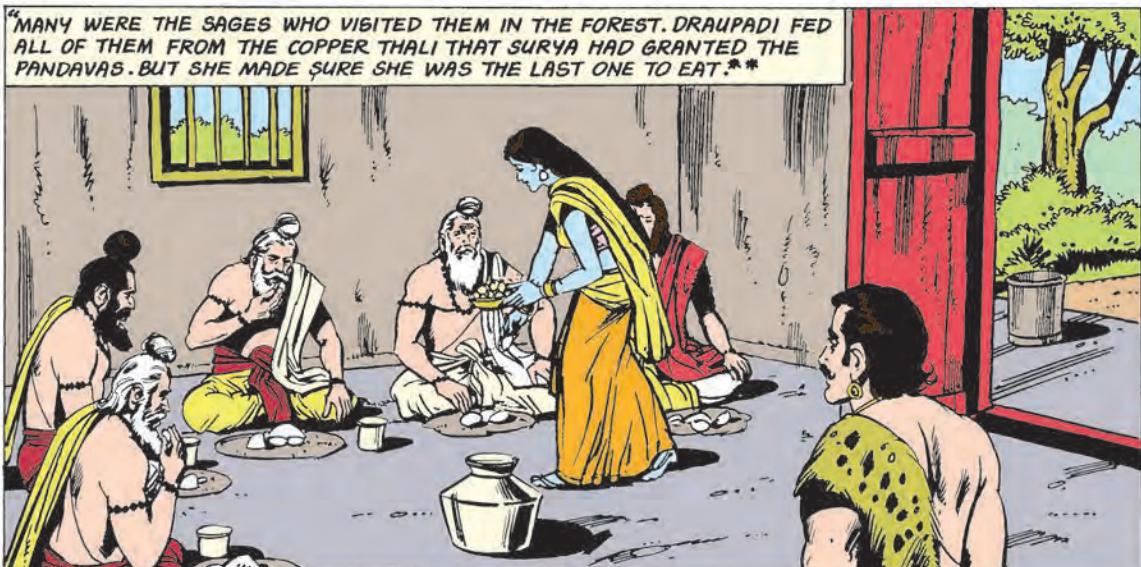
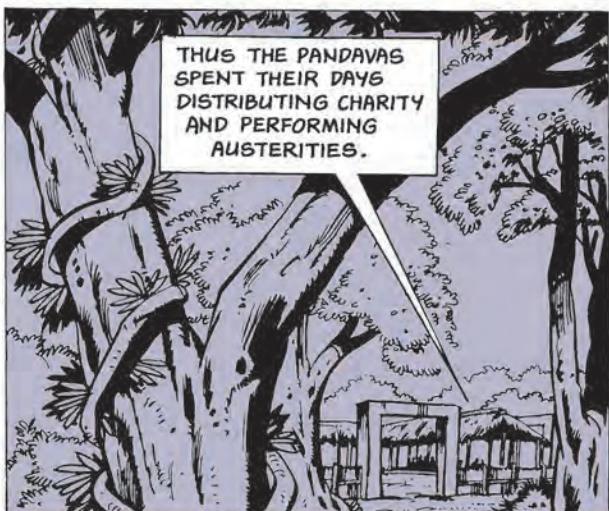
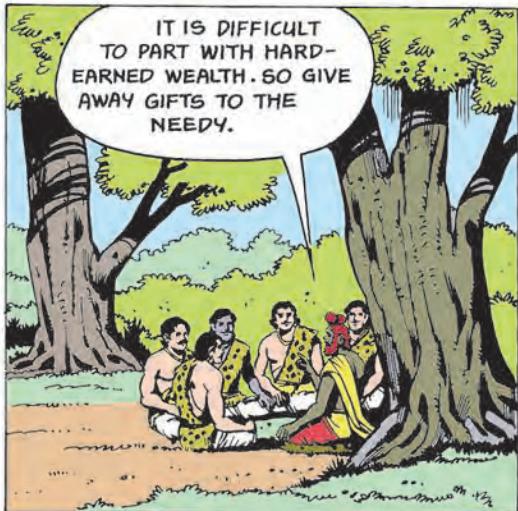
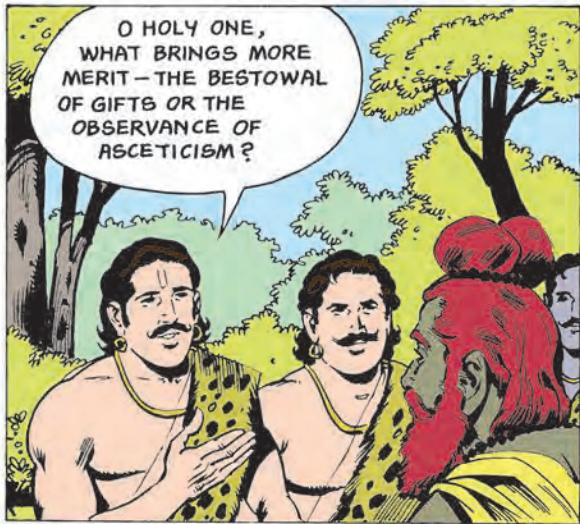
"THEY SPENT THE TWELFTH YEAR OF THEIR EXILE THERE IN ACTS OF CHARITY AND IN THE PERFORMANCE OF RELIGIOUS SACRIFICES.



"ONE DAY THE SAGE VYASA CAME TO THE KAMYAKA FOREST TO SEE THE PANDAVAS. HE SAID TO YUDHISHTHIRA —

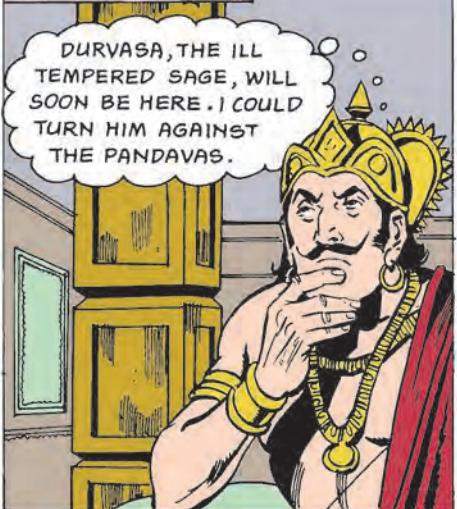
O VIRTUOUS YUDHISHTHIRA, LIFE HAS ITS UPS AND DOWNS. NEITHER IS IT FILLED WITH JOY NOR WITH GRIEF. WHEN ONE IS BLESSED WITH GOOD FORTUNE ONE MUST KNOW HOW TO BE HAPPY AND WHEN MISERY STRIKES ONE SHOULD BEAR IT WITH FORTITUDE.





** THE FOOD FROM THIS THALI WAS INEXHAUSTIBLE AT EACH MEAL TILL DRAUPADI HAD EATEN.

"BUT THE PANDAVAS BEING HAPPY IN EXILE, FURTHER FILLED DURYODHANA WITH ENVY."



"AS EXPECTED, DURVASA CAME ONE DAY WITH HUNDREDS OF HIS FOLLOWERS TO HASTINAPURA."



"DURYODHANA RECEIVED HIM COURTEOUSLY AND LOOKED AFTER HIS EVERY NEED."



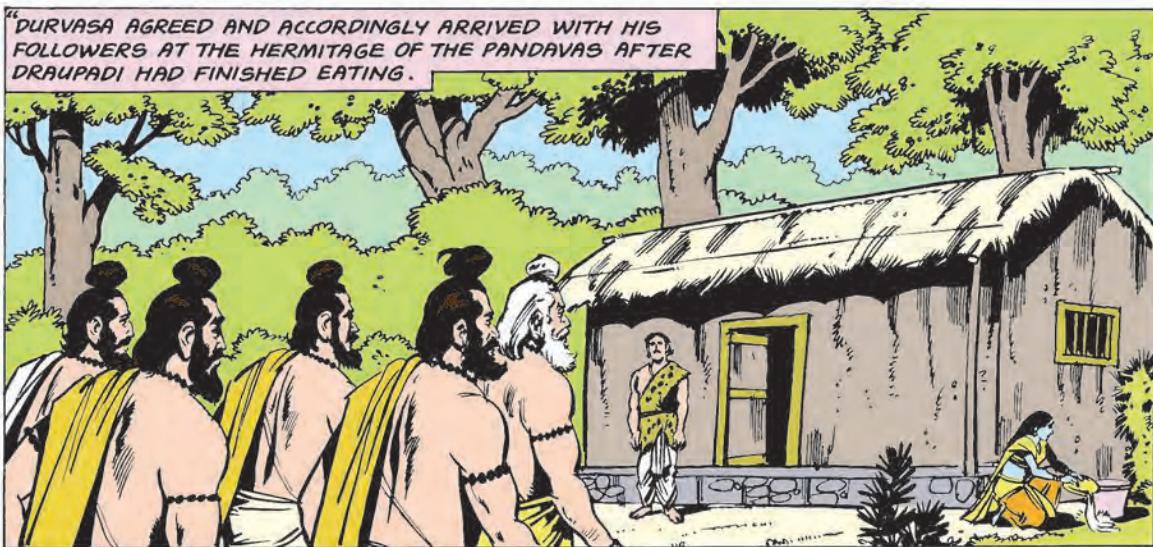
"DURYODHANA FED THE SAGE AND HIS FOLLOWERS. PLEASED WITH HIS LAVISH HOSPITALITY, DURVASA SAID —



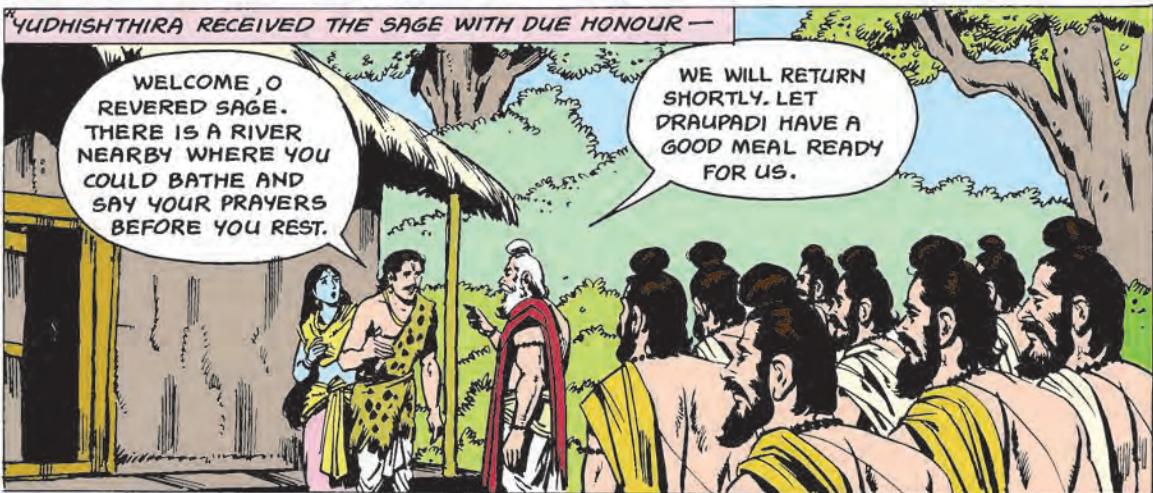
"DURYODHANA SAID —



"DURVASA AGREED AND ACCORDINGLY ARRIVED WITH HIS FOLLOWERS AT THE HERMITAGE OF THE PANDAVAS AFTER DRAUPADI HAD FINISHED EATING.



"YUDHISHTHIRA RECEIVED THE SAGE WITH DUE HONOUR —



WELCOME, O
REVERED SAGE.
THERE IS A RIVER
NEARBY WHERE YOU
COULD BATHE AND
SAY YOUR PRAYERS
BEFORE YOU REST.

WE WILL RETURN
SHORTLY. LET
DRAUPADI HAVE A
GOOD MEAL READY
FOR US.

"DRAUPADI FELT HELPLESS AND IN HER DESPAIR PRAYED TO THE LORD.

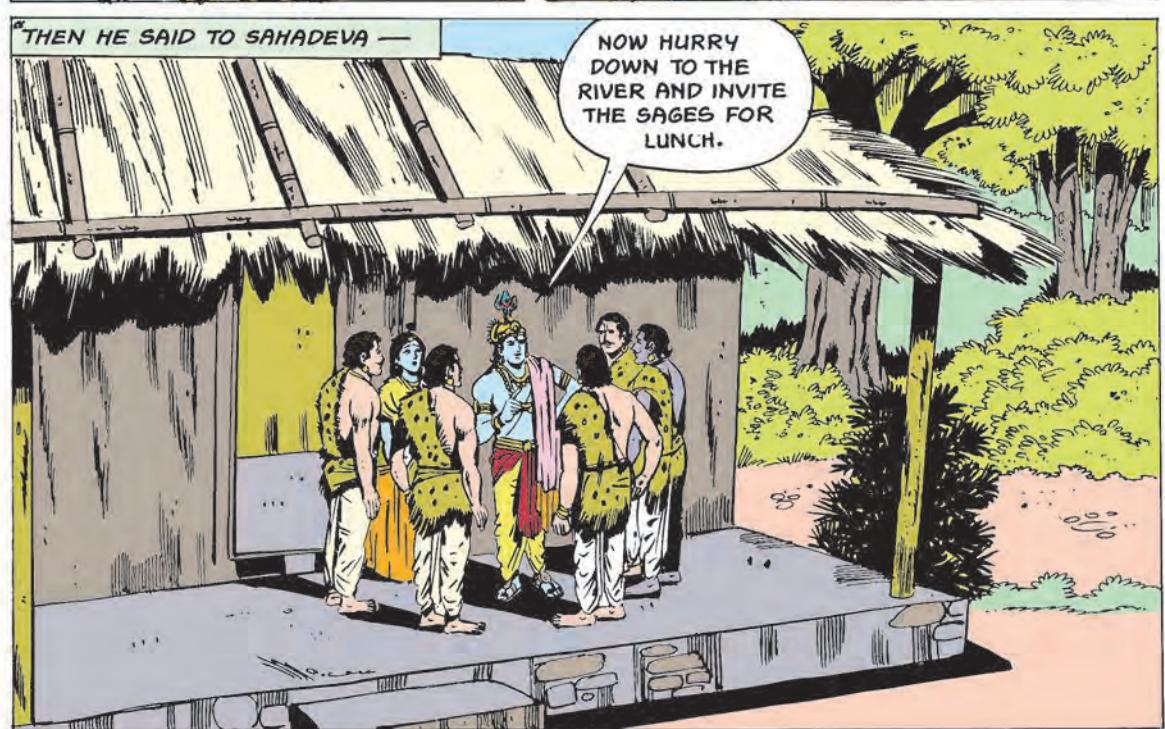
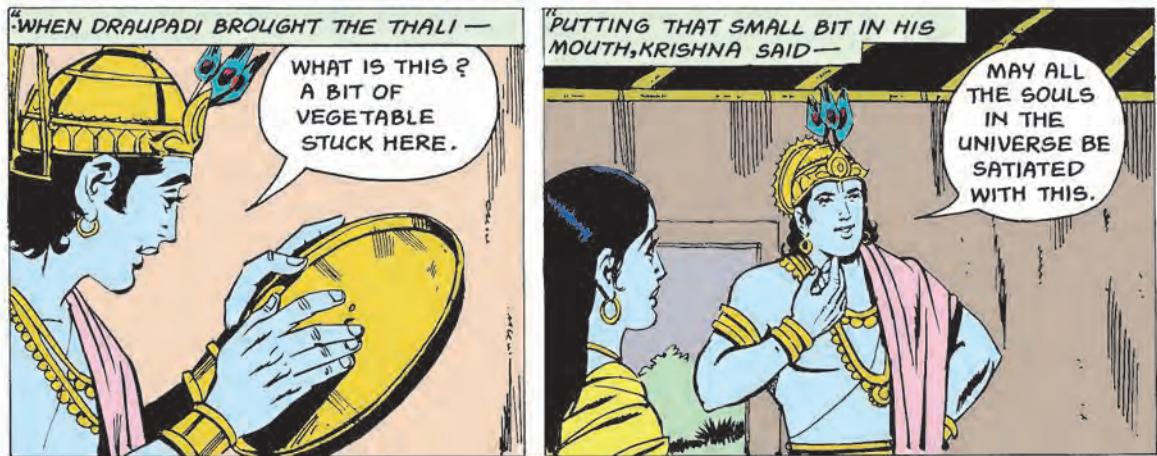


O KRISHNA, YOU
MUST SAVE ME
FROM THE WRATH
OF DURVASA.

"JUST THEN KRISHNA APPEARED —



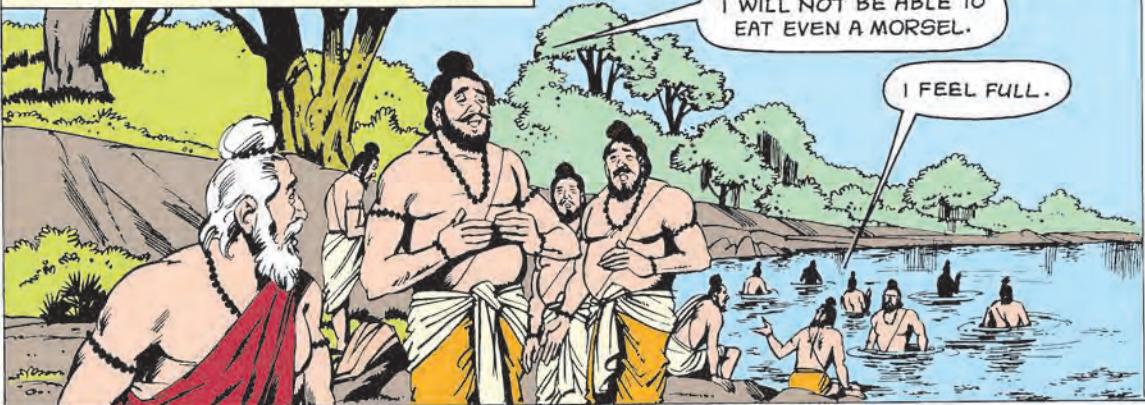
DRAUPADI,
I AM VERY HUNGRY.
GIVE ME SOMETHING
TO EAT FIRST.



"MEANWHILE THE RISHI AND HIS DISCIPLES BATHING IN THE RIVER SUDDENLY REALISED THAT THEY DID NOT FEEL HUNGRY ANY MORE."

I WILL NOT BE ABLE TO EAT EVEN A MORSEL.

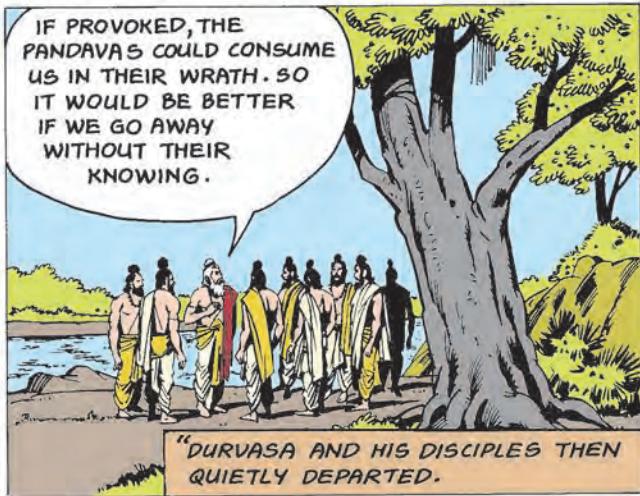
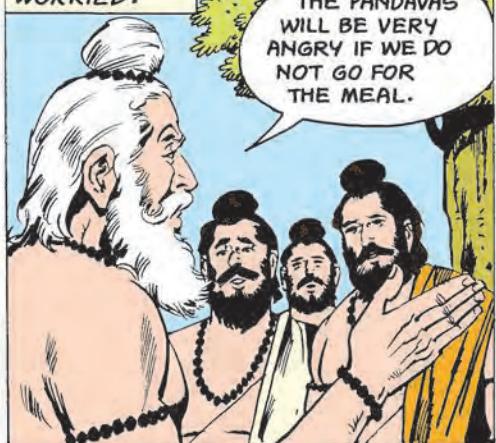
I FEEL FULL.



"DURVASA WAS WORRIED.

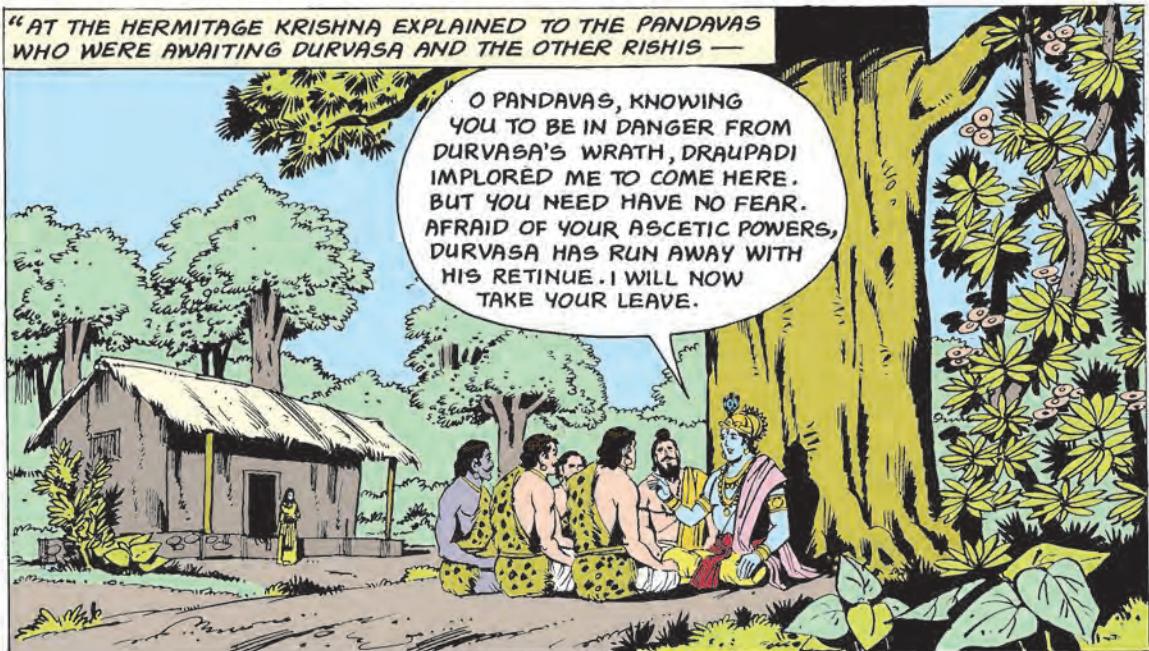
THE PANDAVAS WILL BE VERY ANGRY IF WE DO NOT GO FOR THE MEAL.

IF PROVOKED, THE PANDAVAS COULD CONSUME US IN THEIR WRATH. SO IT WOULD BE BETTER IF WE GO AWAY WITHOUT THEIR KNOWING.

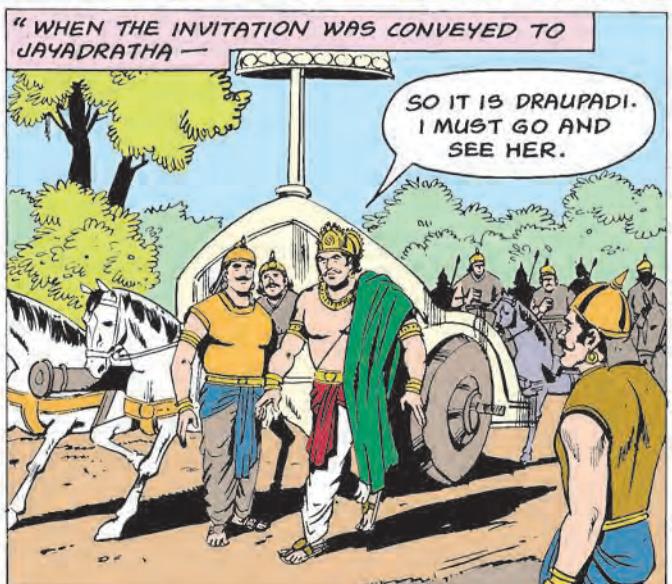
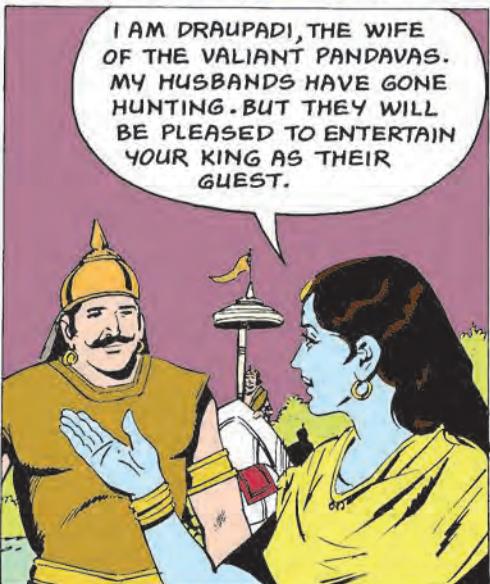
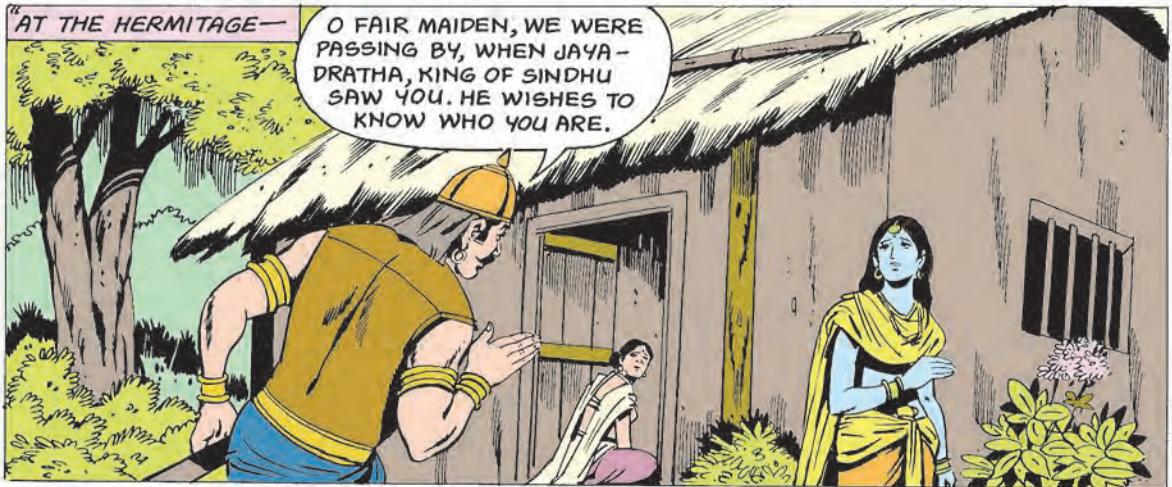
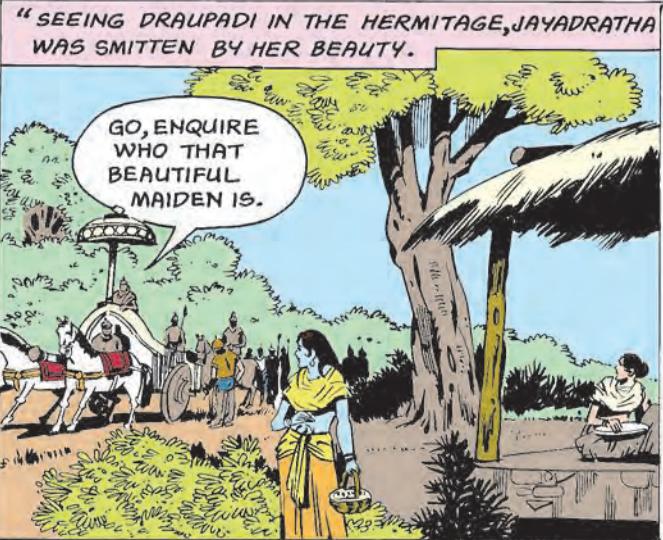
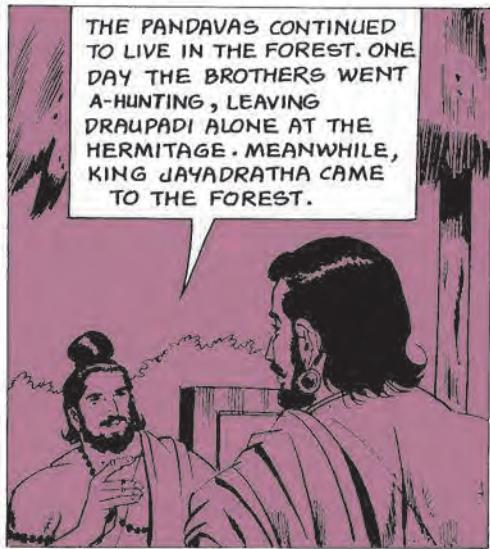


"AT THE HERMITAGE KRISHNA EXPLAINED TO THE PANDAVAS WHO WERE AWAITING DURVASA AND THE OTHER RISHIS —

O PANDAVAS, KNOWING YOU TO BE IN DANGER FROM DURVASA'S WRATH, DRAUPADI IMPORED ME TO COME HERE. BUT YOU NEED HAVE NO FEAR. AFRAID OF YOUR ASCETIC POWERS, DURVASA HAS RUN AWAY WITH HIS RETINUE. I WILL NOW TAKE YOUR LEAVE.



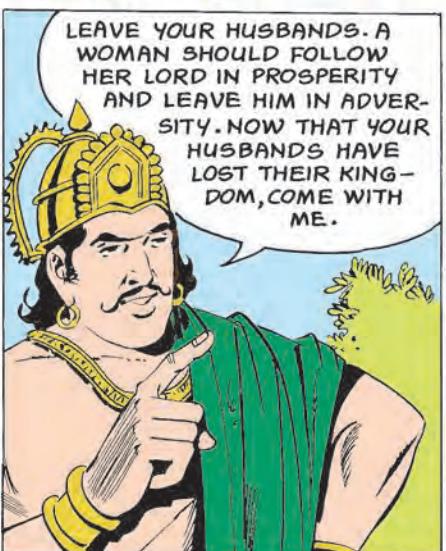
THE PANDAVAS CONTINUED TO LIVE IN THE FOREST. ONE DAY THE BROTHERS WENT A-HUNTING, LEAVING DRAUPADI ALONE AT THE HERMITAGE. MEANWHILE, KING JAYADRATHA CAME TO THE FOREST.



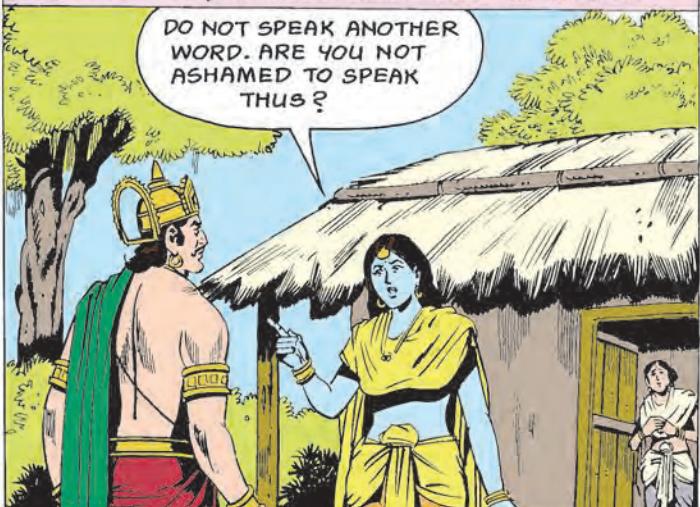
"DRAUPADI RECEIVED JAYADRATHA WITH THE COURTESY DUE TO A KING."



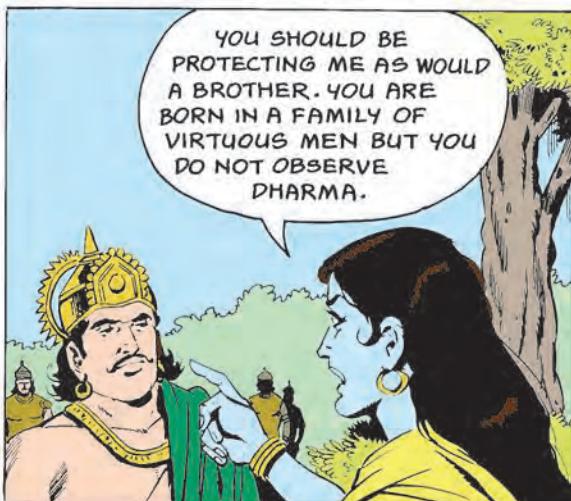
LEAVE YOUR HUSBANDS. A WOMAN SHOULD FOLLOW HER LORD IN PROSPERITY AND LEAVE HIM IN ADVERSITY. NOW THAT YOUR HUSBANDS HAVE LOST THEIR KINGDOM, COME WITH ME.



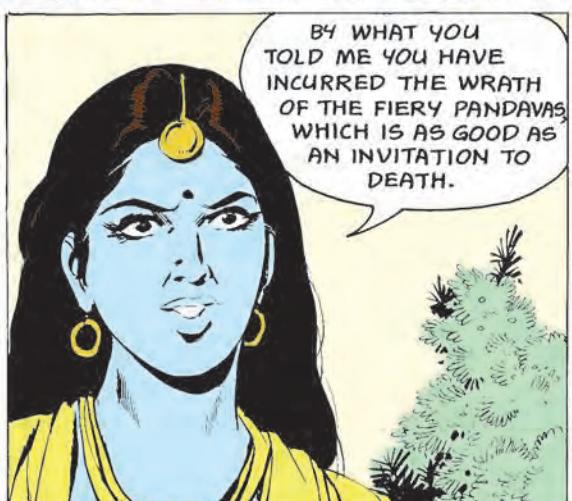
"DRAUPADI SAID, HER FACE CONTORTED IN ANGER —

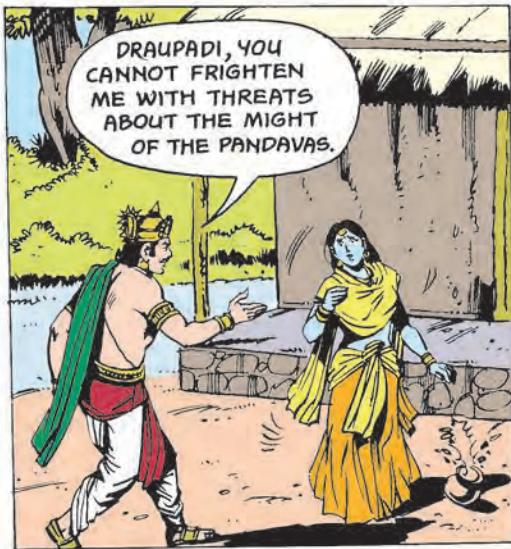


YOU SHOULD BE PROTECTING ME AS WOULD A BROTHER. YOU ARE BORN IN A FAMILY OF VIRTUOUS MEN BUT YOU DO NOT OBSERVE DHARMA.

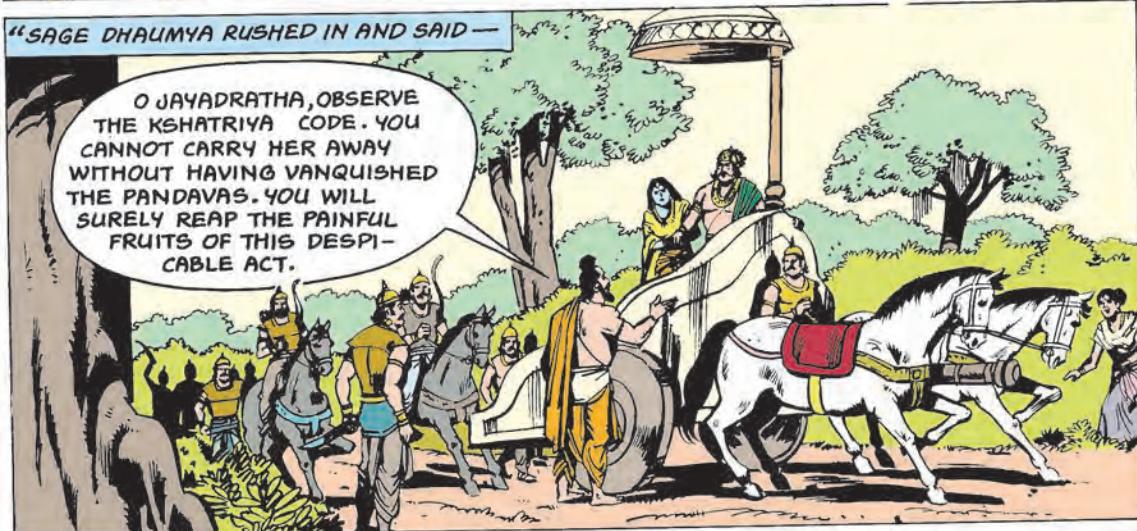


BY WHAT YOU TOLD ME YOU HAVE INCURRED THE WRATH OF THE FIERY PANDAVAS, WHICH IS AS GOOD AS AN INVITATION TO DEATH.





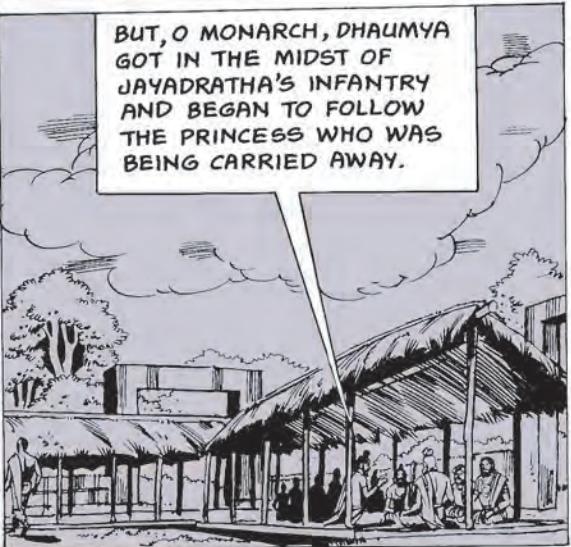
"SAGE DHAUMYA RUSHED IN AND SAID —



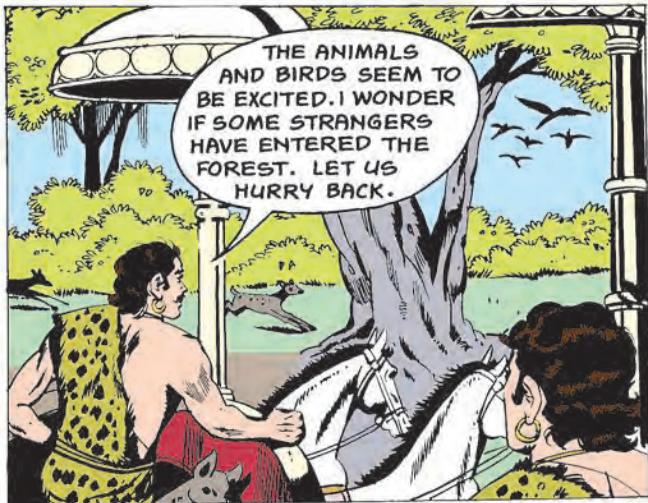
"DISREGARDING THE WORDS OF DHAUMYA, JAYADRATHA DROVE AWAY WITH DRAUPADI IN HIS CHARIOT."



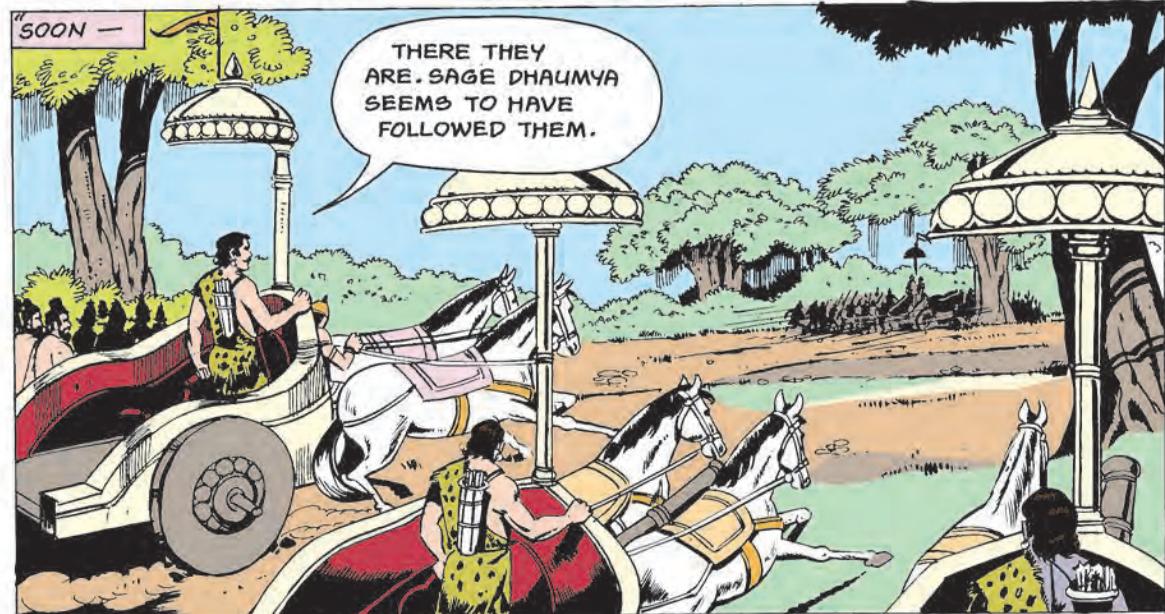
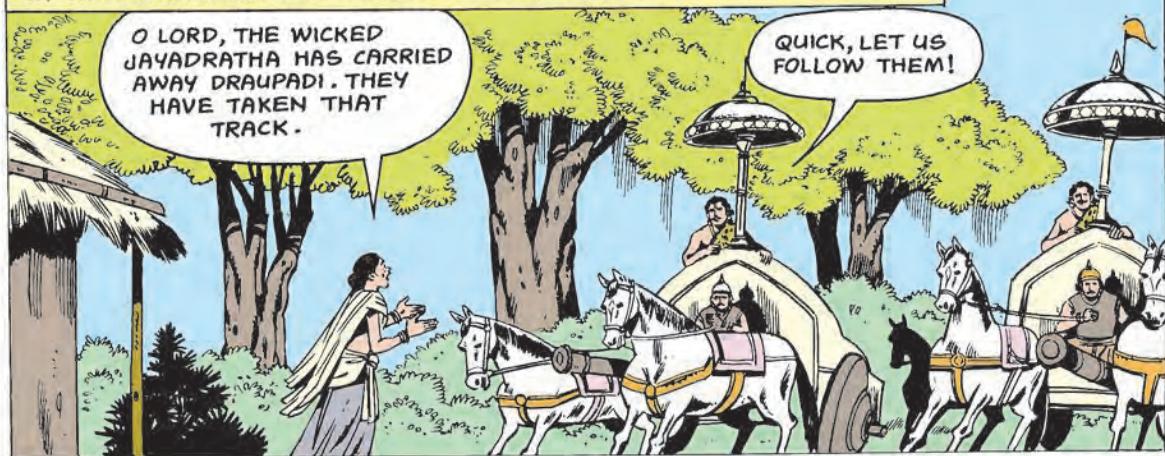
BUT, O MONARCH, DHAUMYA GOT IN THE MIDST OF JAYADRATHA'S INFANTRY AND BEGAN TO FOLLOW THE PRINCESS WHO WAS BEING CARRIED AWAY.



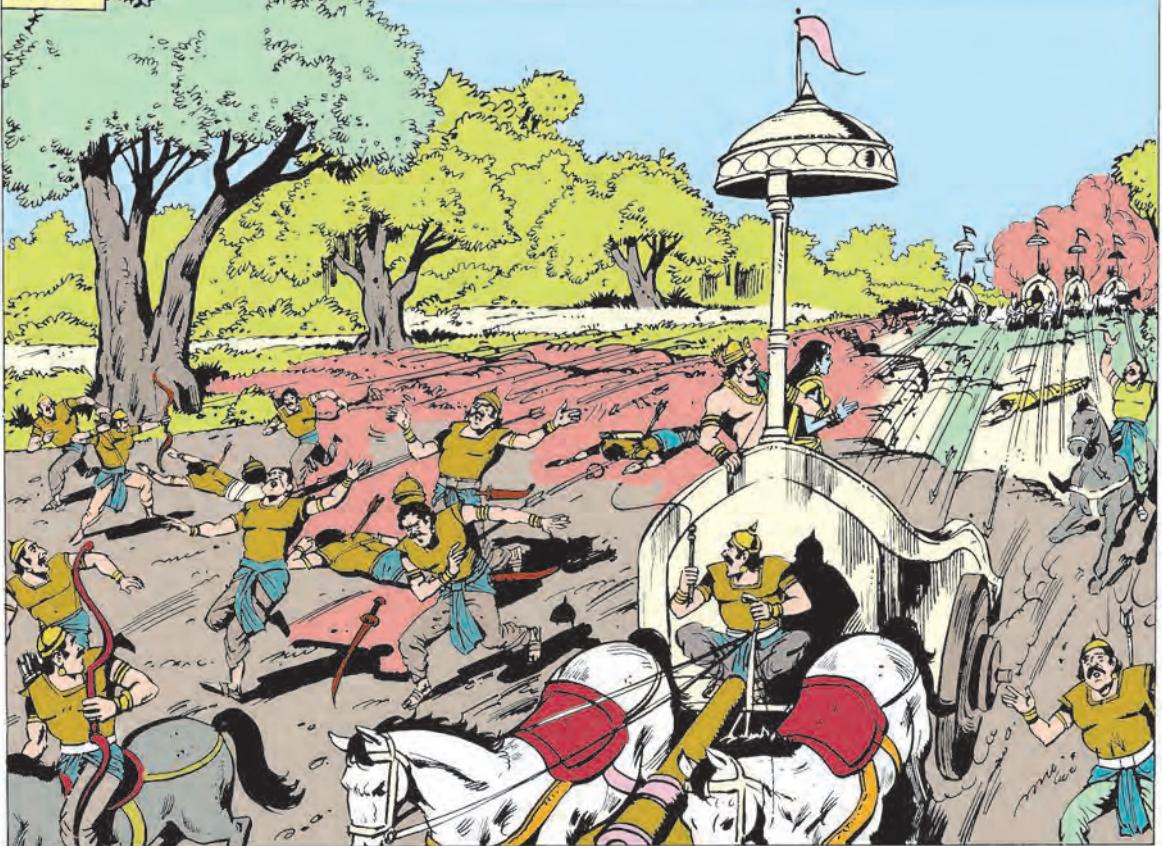
"THE PANDAVAS, IN THE MEANWHILE, WERE ON THEIR WAY BACK FROM THE HUNT.



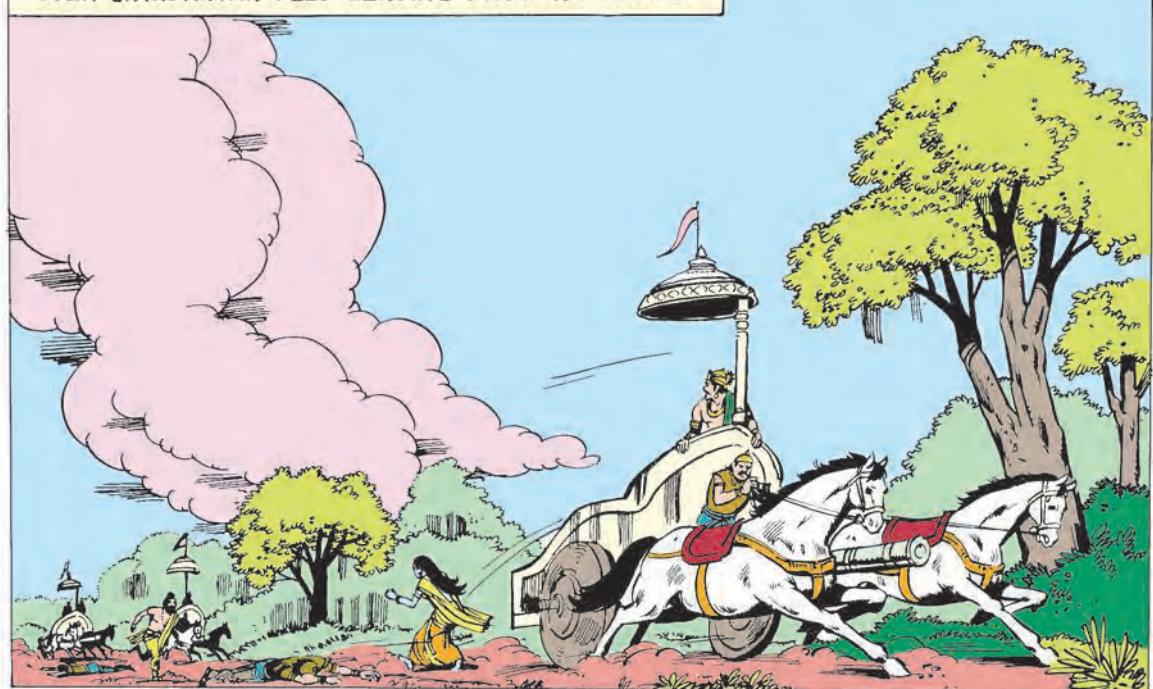
"AT THE HERMITAGE THE PANDAVAS FOUND DRAUPADI'S MAID WEEPING.

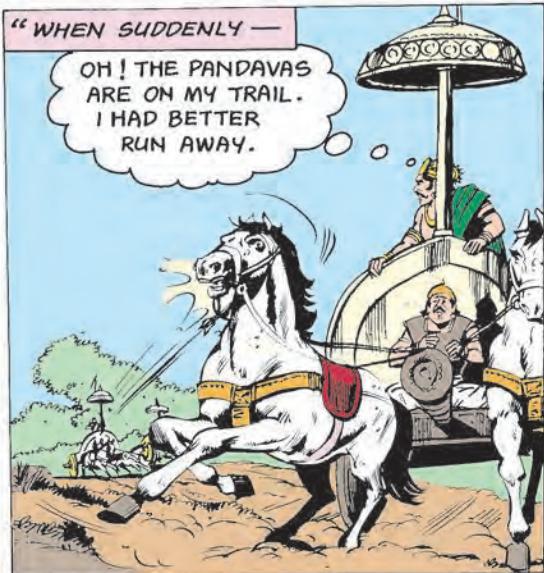
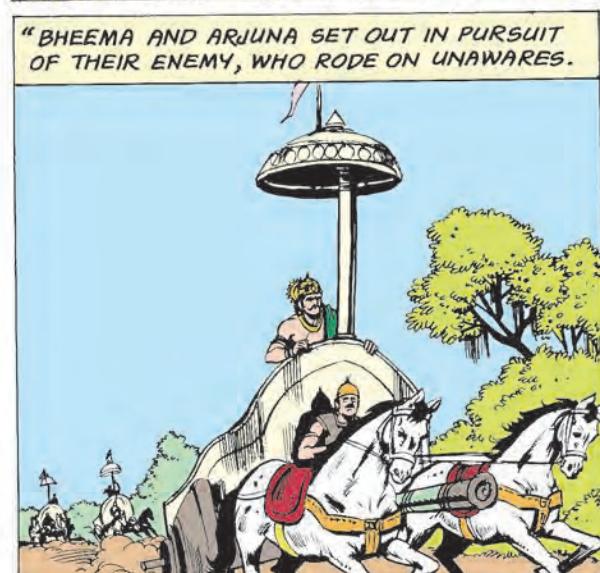
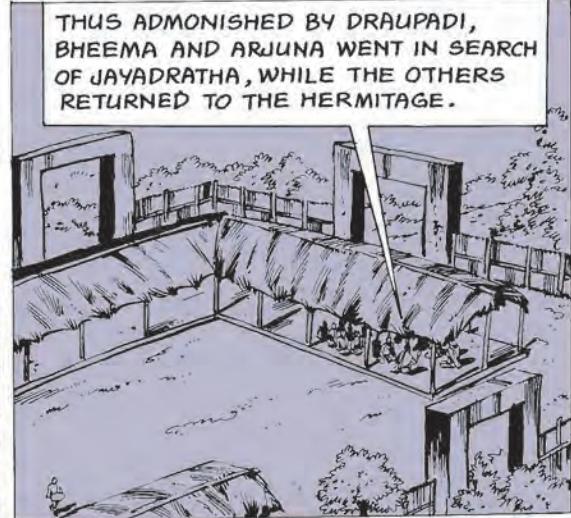
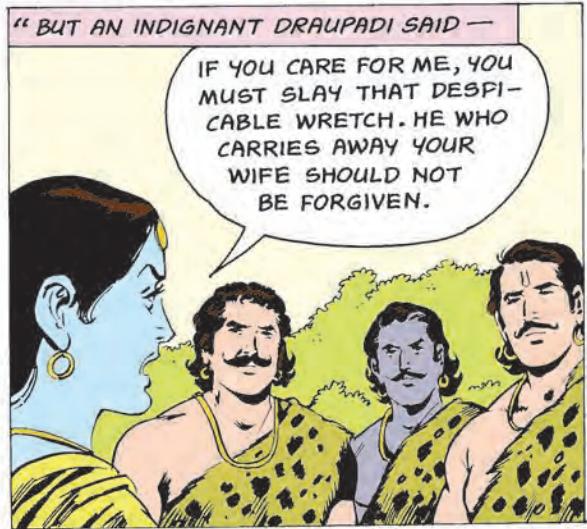
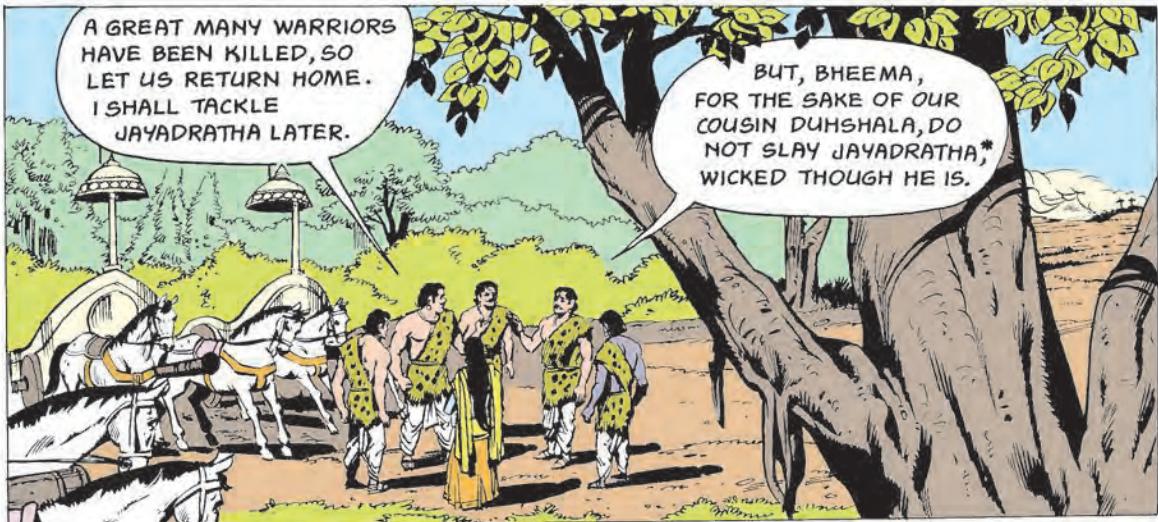


"IN THE FIGHT THAT FOLLOWED, THE PANDAVAS WERE ABLE TO SCATTER JAYADRATHA'S MEN."



"EVEN JAYADRATHA FLED LEAVING DRAUPADI BEHIND."



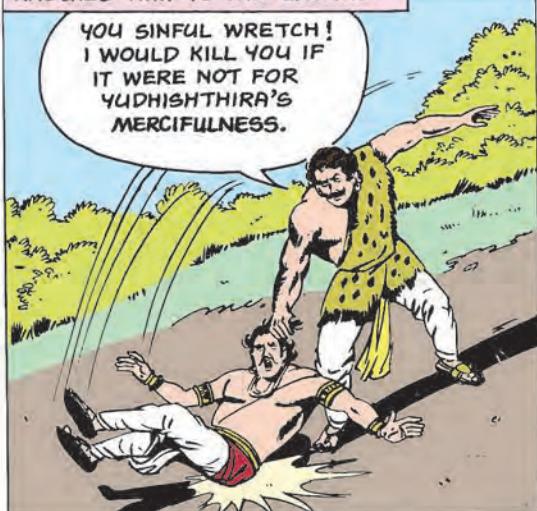


* JAYADRATHA WAS THE HUSBAND OF DUHSHALA, DURYODHANA'S SISTER.



"BHEEMA SEIZED HIM BY HIS HAIR AND KNOCKED HIM TO THE GROUND.

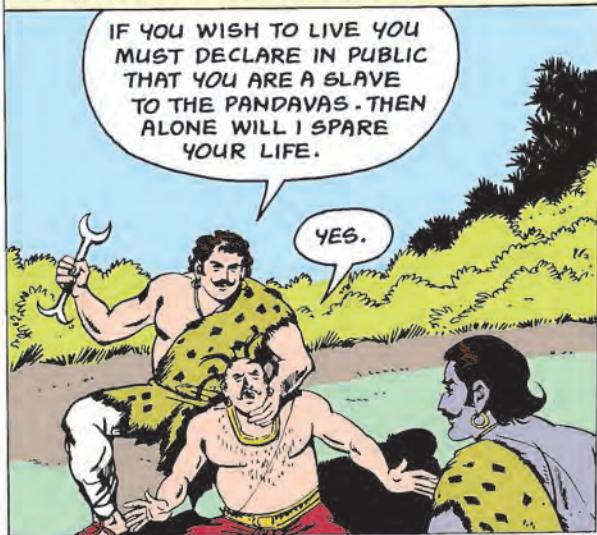
YOU SINFUL WRETCH!
I WOULD KILL YOU IF IT WERE NOT FOR YUDHISHTHIRA'S MERCIFULNESS.



"THEN BHEEMA SHAVED JAYADRATHA'S HEAD.

IF YOU WISH TO LIVE YOU MUST DECLARE IN PUBLIC THAT YOU ARE A SLAVE TO THE PANDAVAS. THEN ALONE WILL I SPARE YOUR LIFE.

YES.



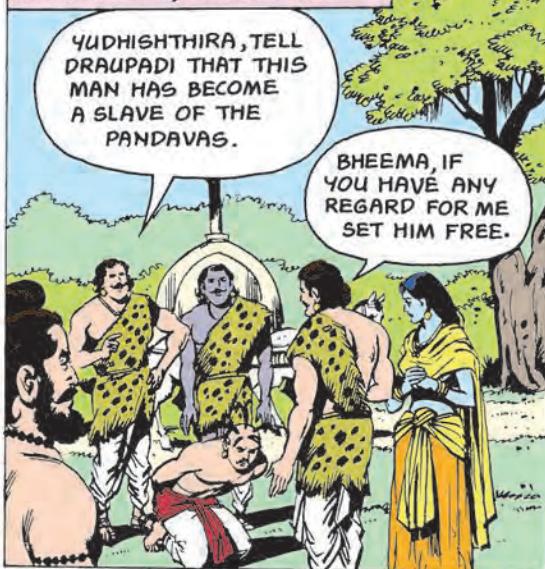
"THEN BHEEMA AND ARJUNA SECURED JAYADRATHA IN CHAINS AND FLUNG HIM INTO A CHARIOT...



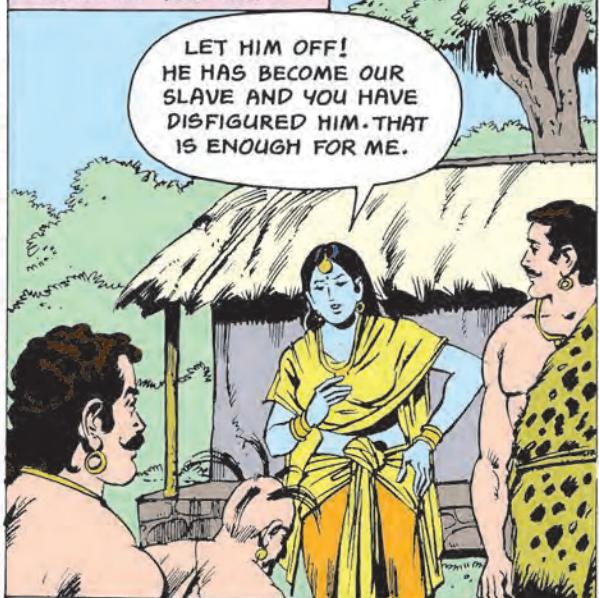
...AND DROVE BACK TO THE HERMITAGE.



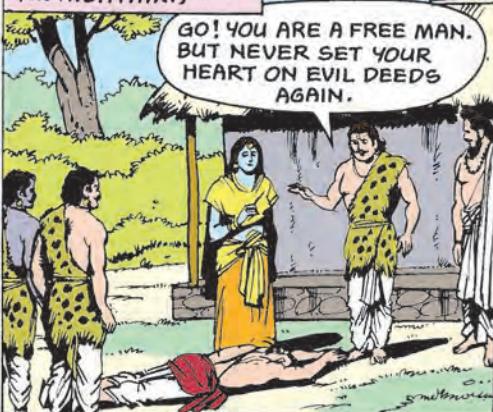
"THROWING JAYADRATHA AT YUDHISHTHIRA'S FEET, BHEEMA SAID—



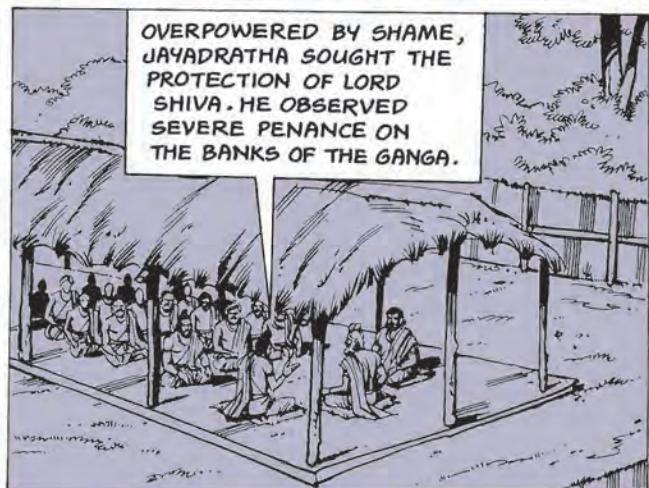
"DRAUPADI TOO SAID—



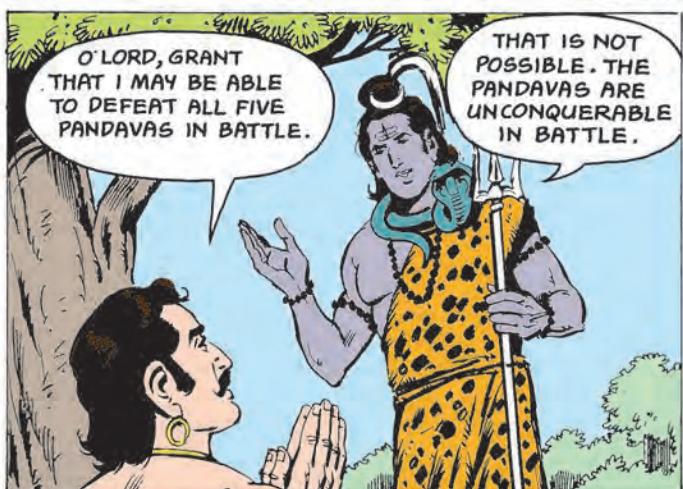
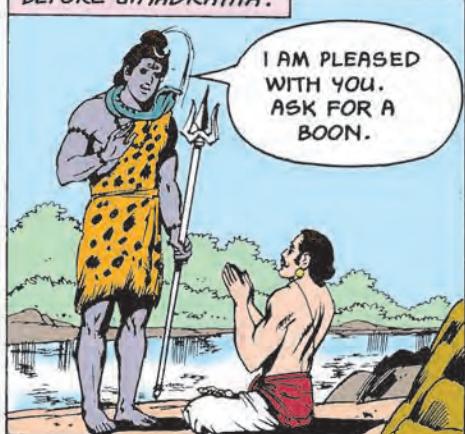
"JAYADRATHA WAS UNCHAINED. AS HE PROSTRATED HIMSELF BEFORE YUDHISHTHIRA —

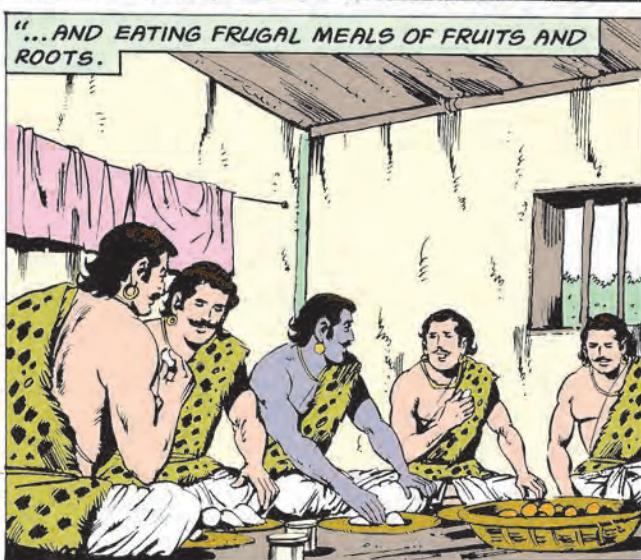
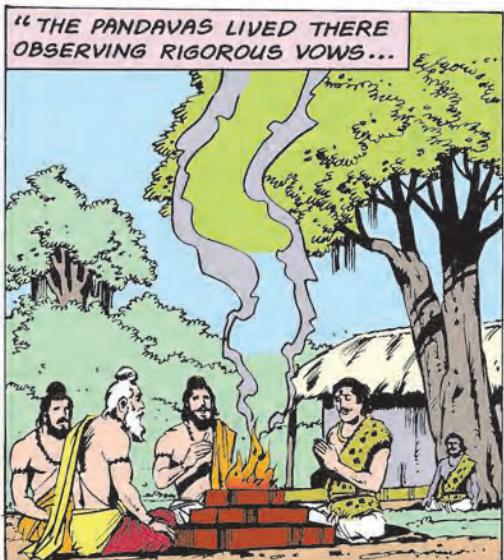
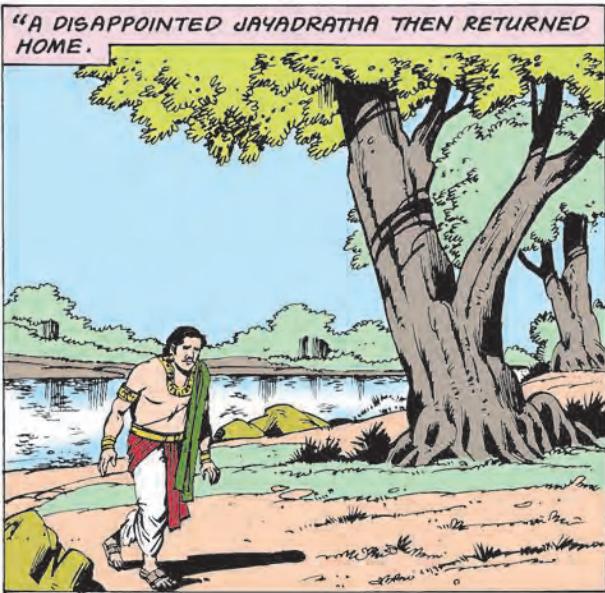
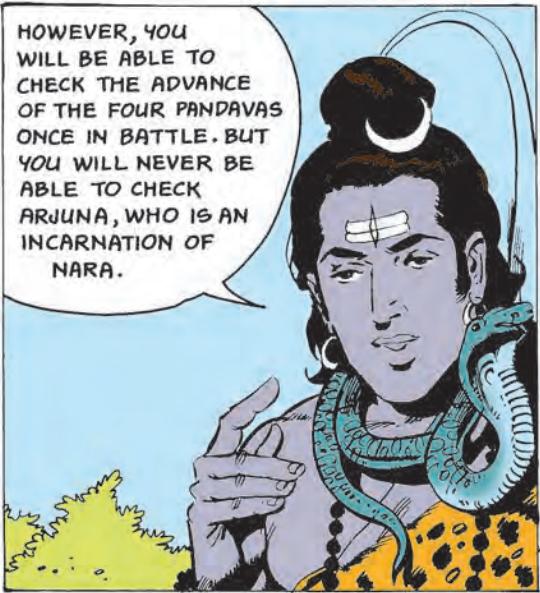


OVERPOWERED BY SHAME, JAYADRATHA SOUGHT THE PROTECTION OF LORD SHIVA. HE OBSERVED SEVERE PENAeON ON THE BANKS OF THE GANGA.

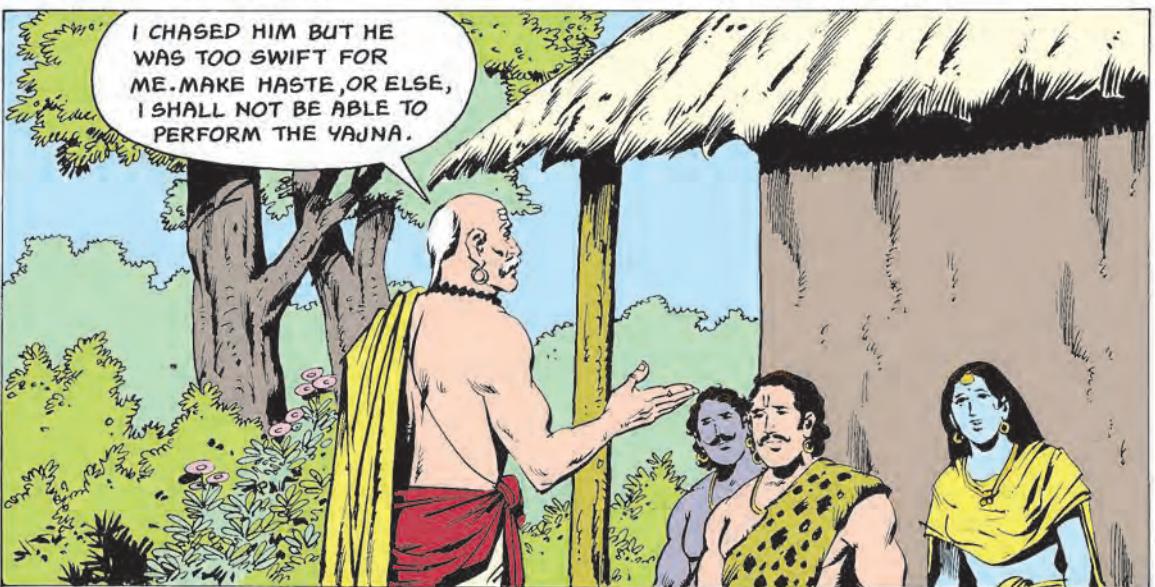
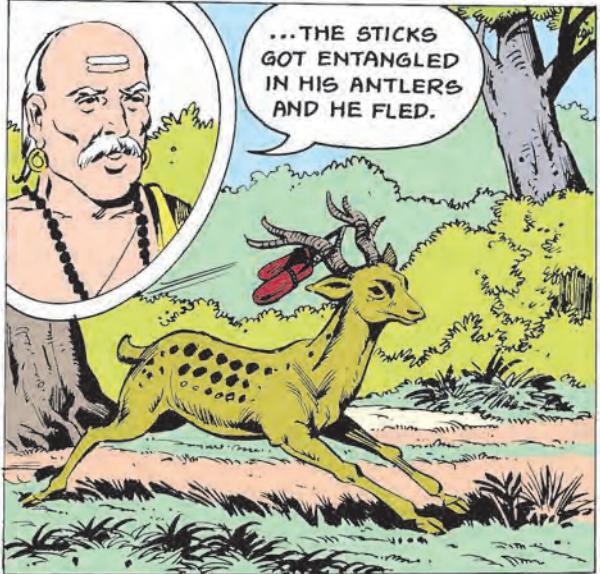
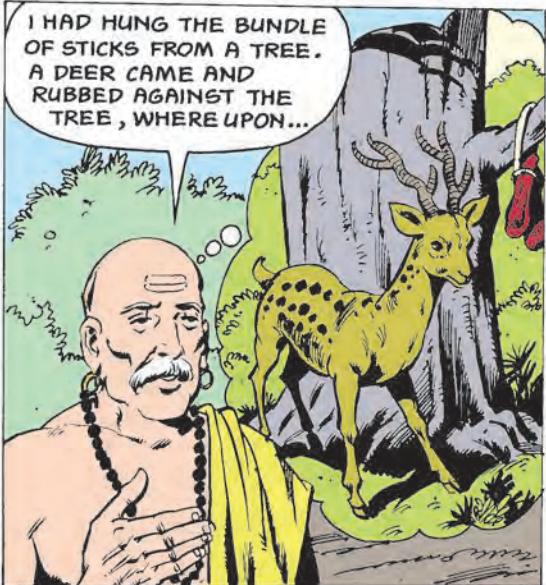


"FINALLY ONE DAY SHIVA APPEARED BEFORE JAYADRATHA.



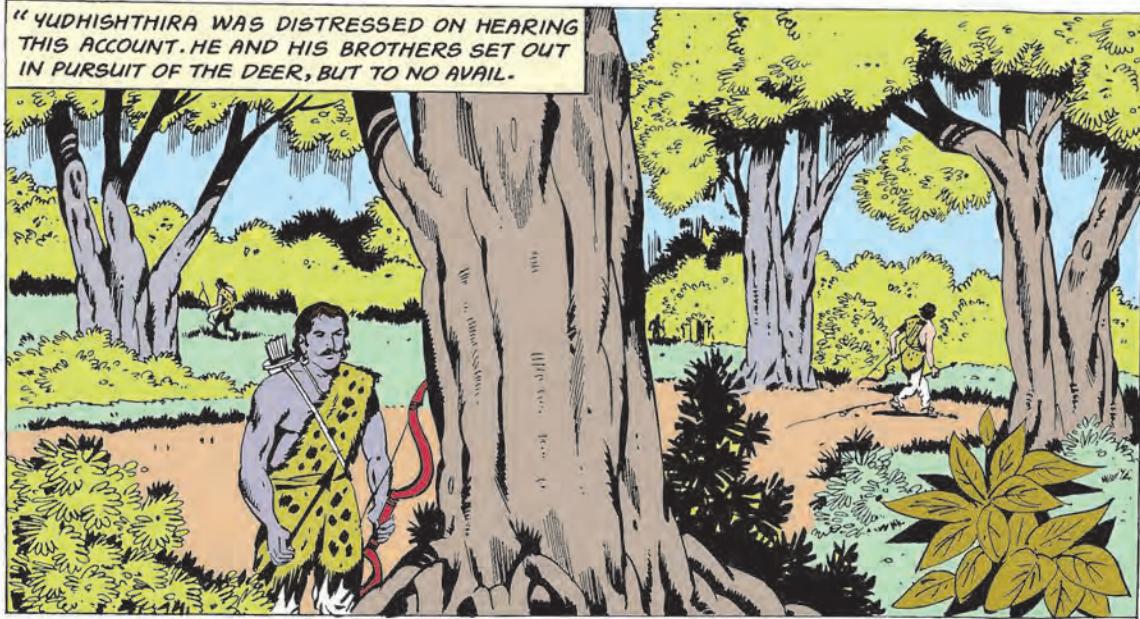


"ONE DAY, WHILE THE PANDAVAS WERE DWELLING IN THE FOREST, A BRAHMANA APPROACHED YUDHISHTHIRA FOR HELP.



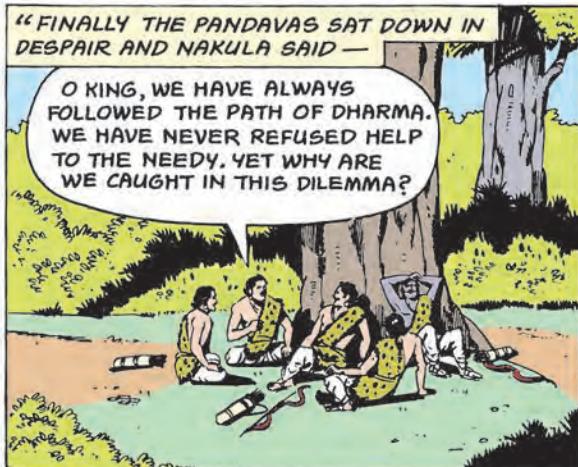
* THE SHAMI STICKS WHEN RUBBED AGAINST EACH OTHER SET OFF SPARKS, WHICH LIGHT THE SACRIFICIAL FIRES.

"YUDHISHTHIRA WAS DISTRESSED ON HEARING THIS ACCOUNT. HE AND HIS BROTHERS SET OUT IN PURSUIT OF THE DEER, BUT TO NO AVAIL.

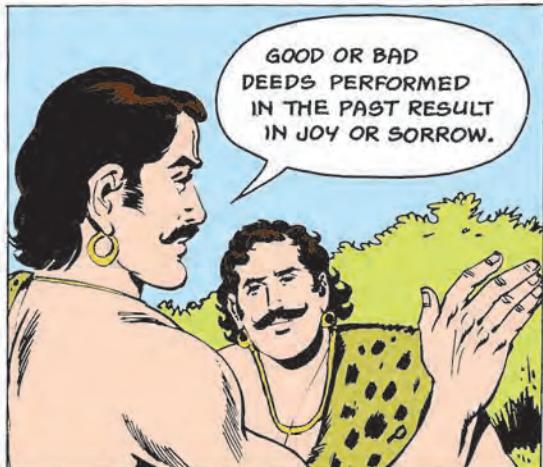


"FINALLY THE PANDAVAS SAT DOWN IN DESPAIR AND NAKULA SAID —

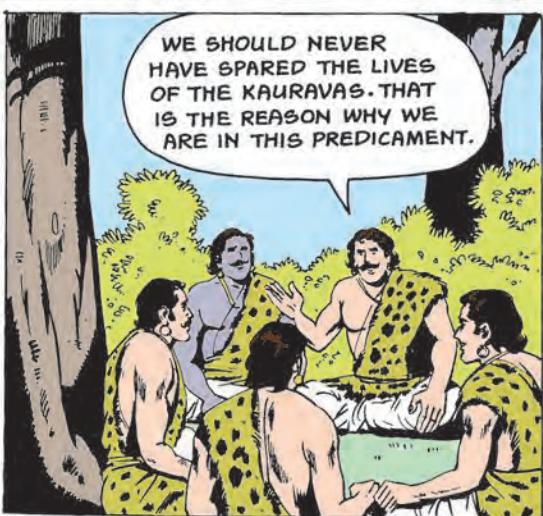
O KING, WE HAVE ALWAYS FOLLOWED THE PATH OF DHARMA. WE HAVE NEVER REFUSED HELP TO THE NEEDY. YET WHY ARE WE CAUGHT IN THIS DILEMMA?



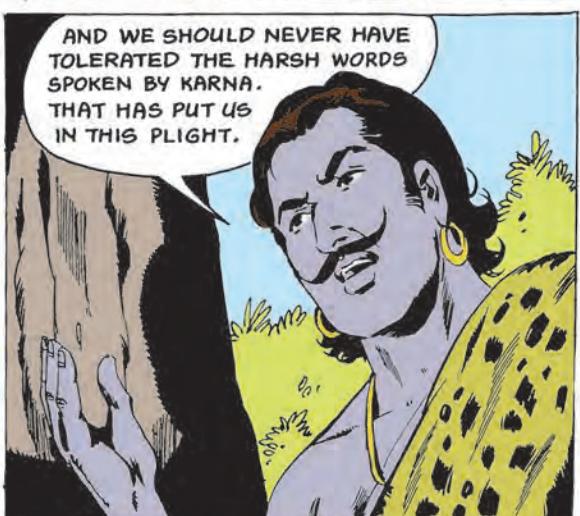
GOOD OR BAD DEEDS PERFORMED IN THE PAST RESULT IN JOY OR SORROW.

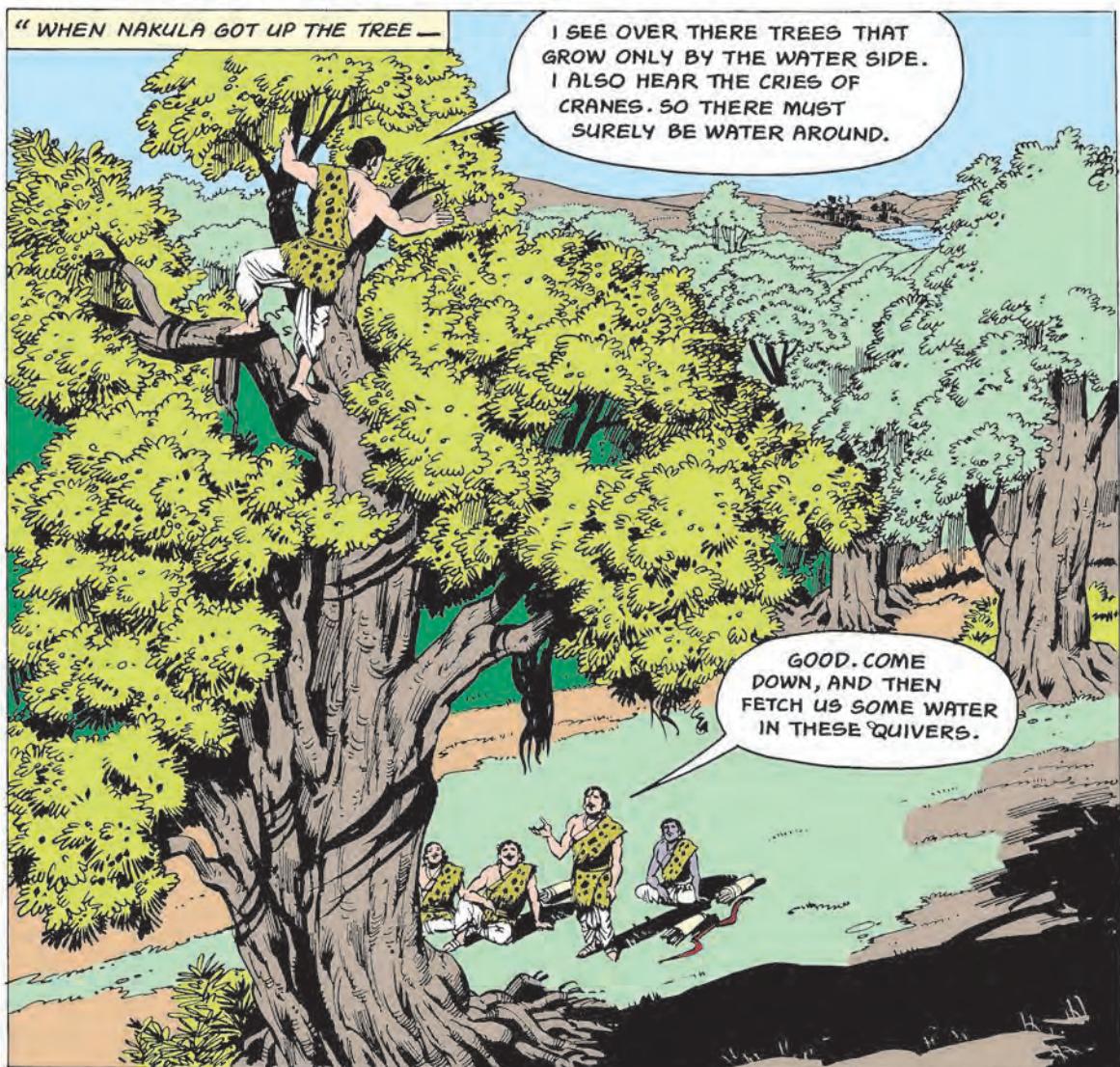
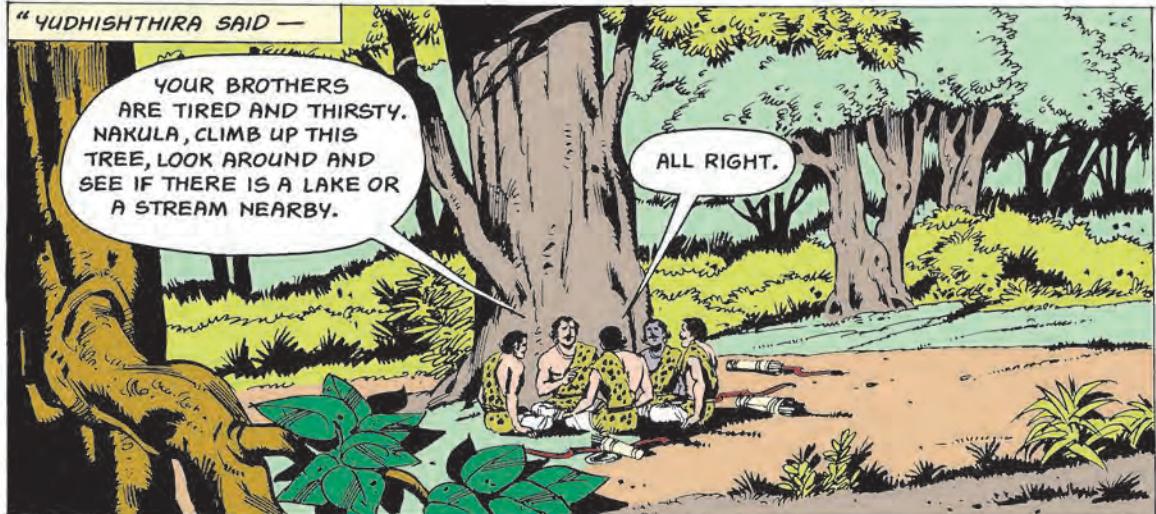


WE SHOULD NEVER HAVE SPARED THE LIVES OF THE KAURAVAS. THAT IS THE REASON WHY WE ARE IN THIS PREDICAMENT.



AND WE SHOULD NEVER HAVE TOLERATED THE HARSH WORDS SPOKEN BY KARNA. THAT HAS PUT US IN THIS PLIGHT.

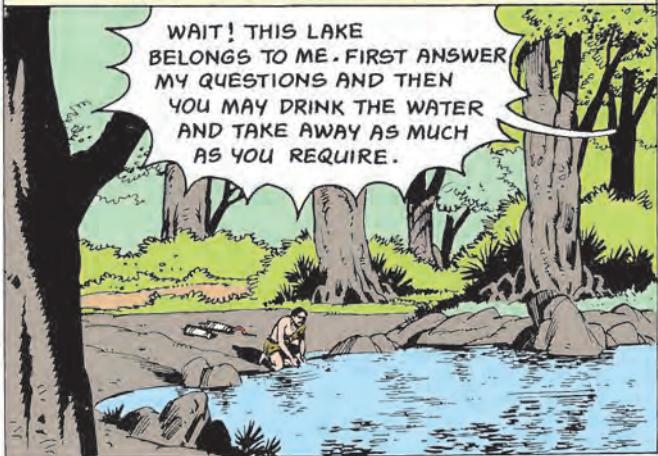




"NAKULA HURRIED TOWARDS THE LAKE.



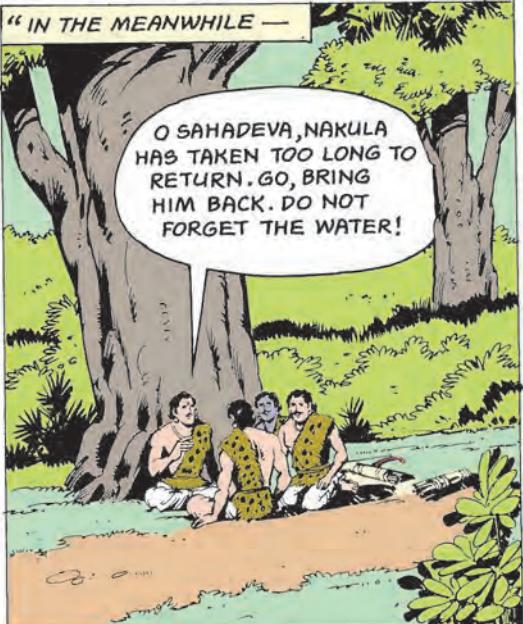
"AT THE LAKE AS HE BENT OVER TO QUENCH HIS THIRST—



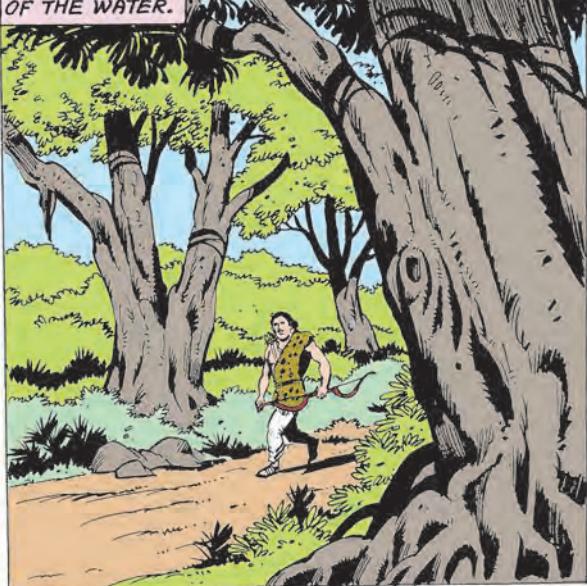
"DISREGARDING THE VOICE, NAKULA DRANK THE WATER. NO SOONER HAD HE DONE THAT THAN HE FELL UNCONSCIOUS.



"IN THE MEANWHILE —



"SO SAHADEVA TOO SET OUT IN THE DIRECTION OF THE WATER.



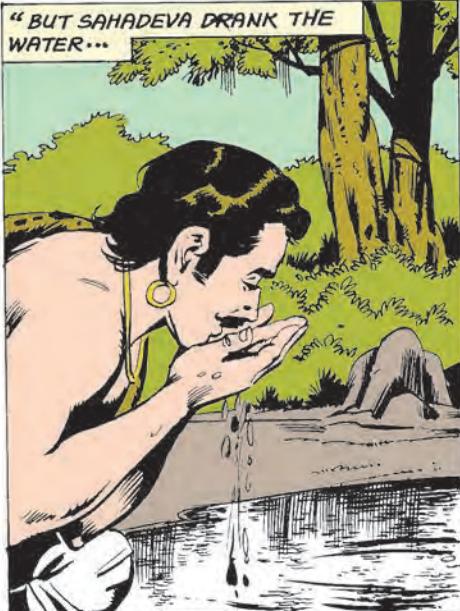
"AT THE LAKE —

NAKULA! NAKULA!
WHAT IS THE MATTER?
HE MUST HAVE DIED OF
THIRST. I HAD BETTER
QUENCH MY THIRST BEFORE
I MEET THE SAME FATE.

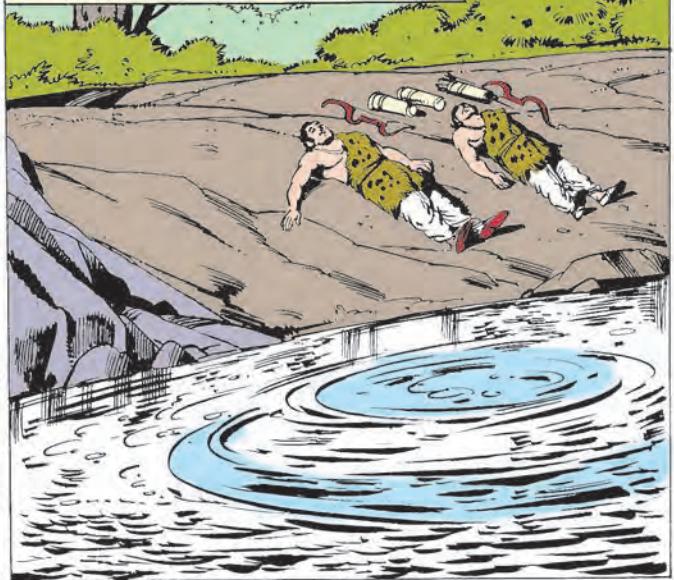


"AS SAHADEVA BENT OVER —

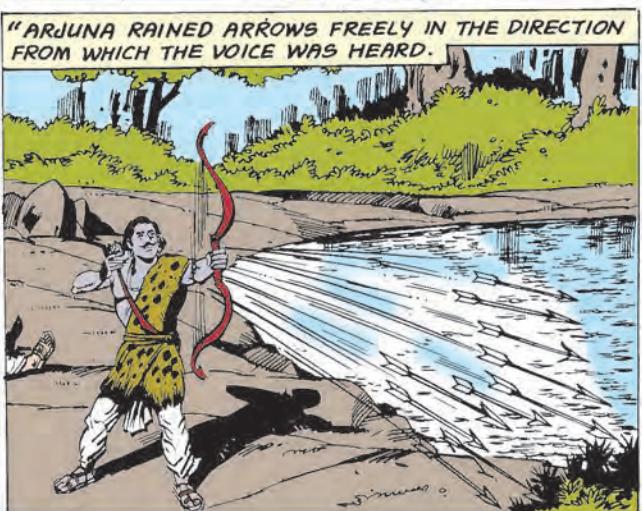
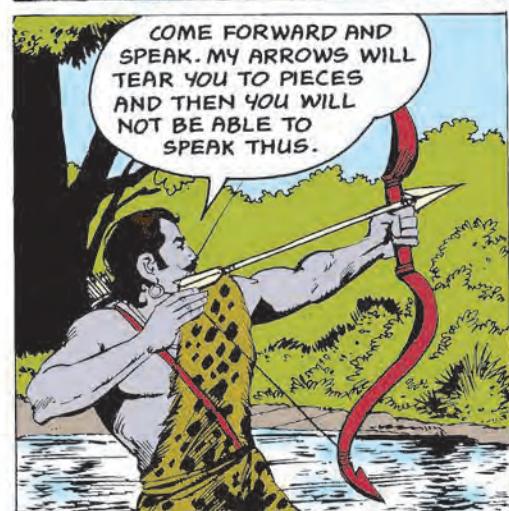
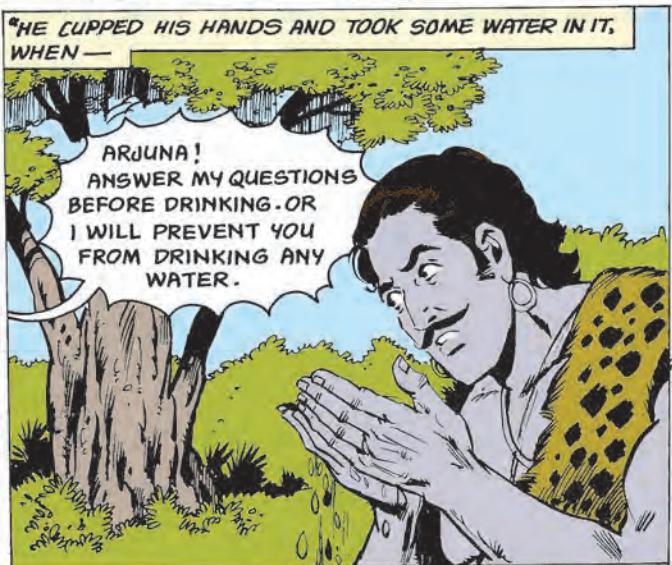
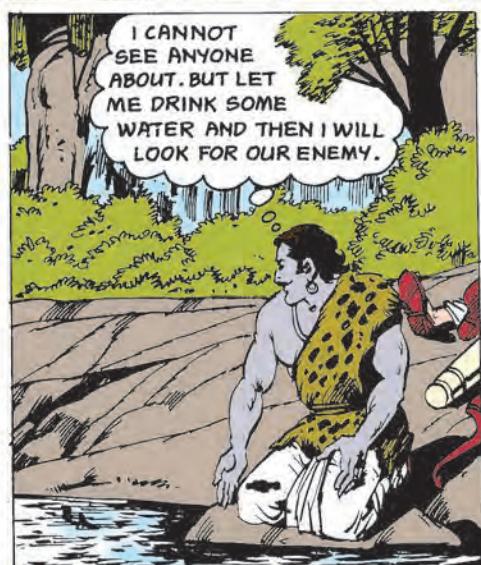
DO NOT DRINK THE
WATER WITHOUT FIRST
ANSWERING MY QUESTIONS.
AFTER THAT YOU MAY TAKE
AS MUCH AS YOU WANT.

"BUT SAHADEVA DRANK THE
WATER..."

"...AND HE TOO FELL UNCONSCIOUS.

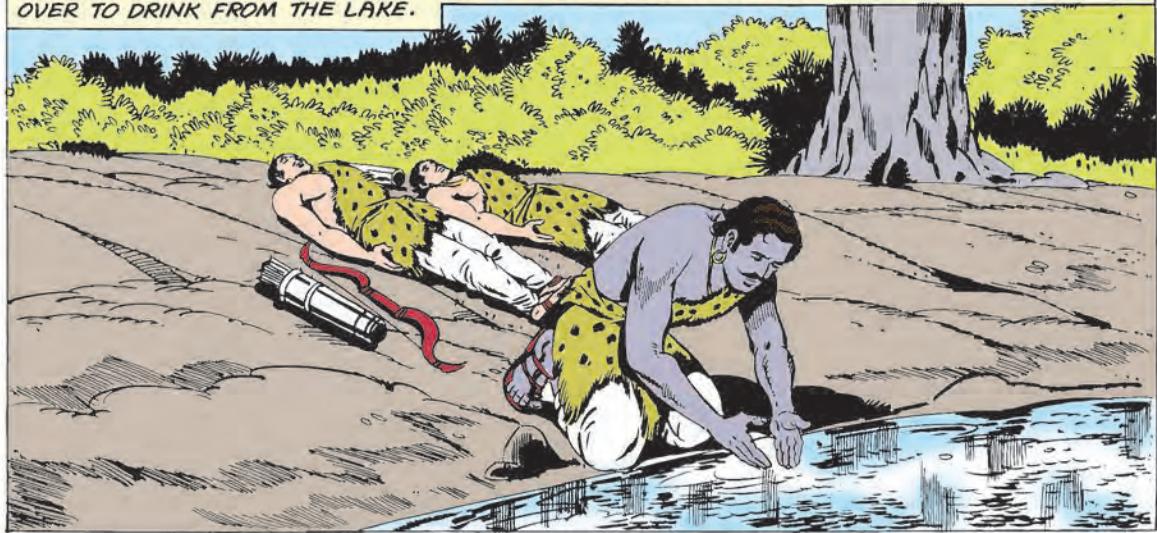


"SO WHEN ARJUNA CAME TO THE LAKE NEXT—

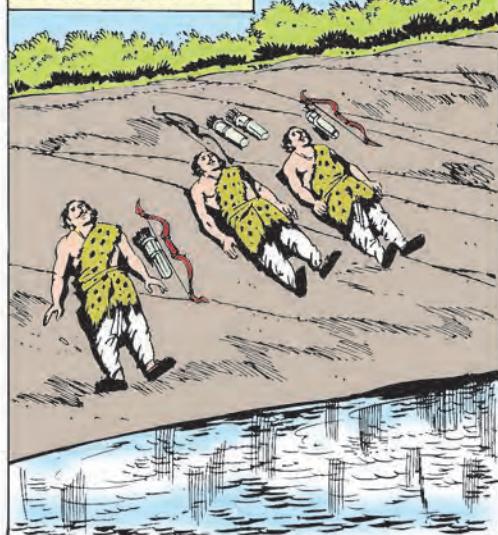




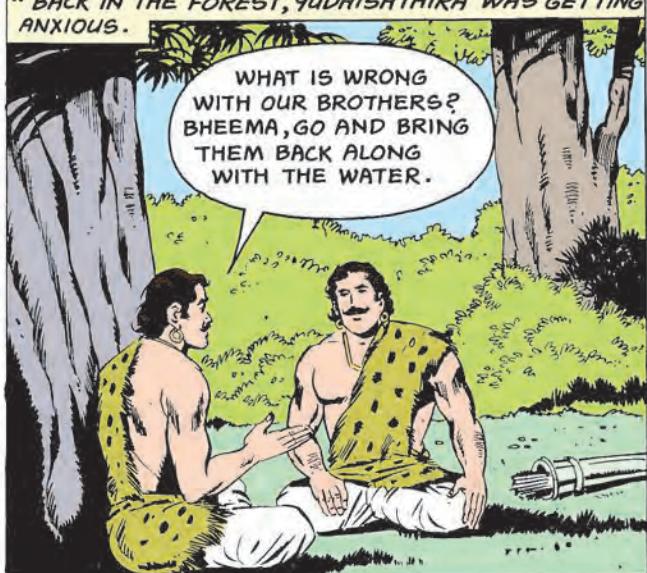
"BUT ARJUNA WAS TIRED AND THIRSTY. DECIDING TO TAKE ACTION LATER, HE TOO BENT OVER TO DRINK FROM THE LAKE.



"AND HE TOO PAID THE SAME PRICE AS HIS BROTHERS.



"BACK IN THE FOREST, YUDHISHTHIRA WAS GETTING ANXIOUS.



"WHEN BHEEMA REACHED THE LAKE —

THIS MUST BE
THE ACT OF SOME
YAKSHAS. TODAY
I WILL HAVE TO
FIGHT THEM. LET
ME FIRST DRINK
SOME WATER.

SO BHEEMA TOO SUFFERED
ED THE SAME FATE
AS HIS BROTHERS
BY THE LAKESIDE.

"SOON YUDHISHTHIRA TOO SET OUT LOOKING FOR HIS BROTHERS.

WHAT COULD BE
THE REASON FOR THEIR
DELAY? HAVE THEY FALLEN
PREY TO SOME WILD
BEAST? OR HAVE THEY
BEEN UNABLE TO FIND
THE WATER?

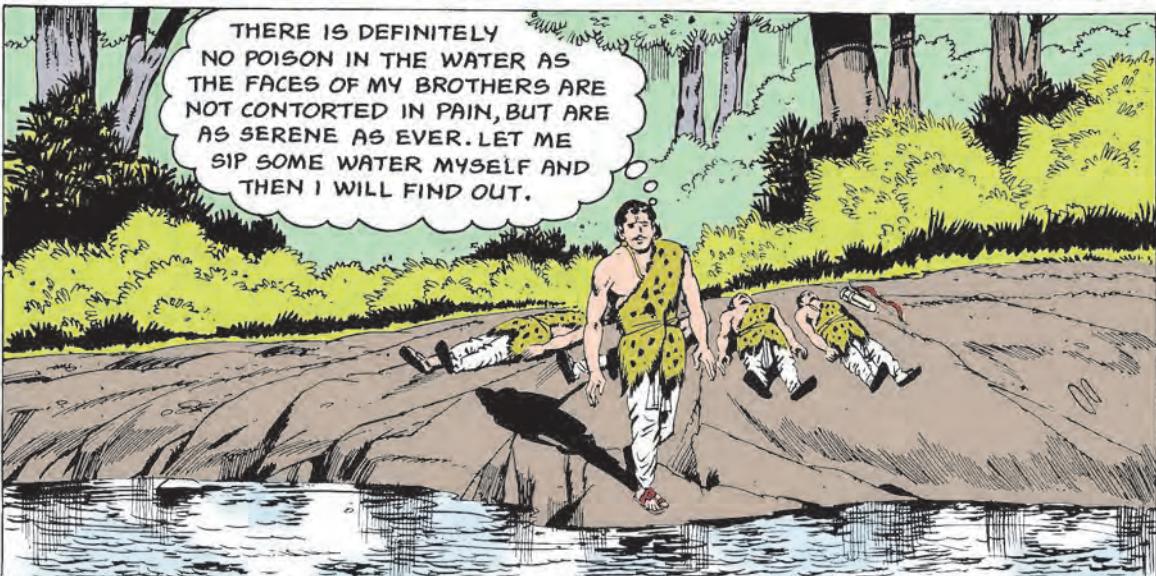
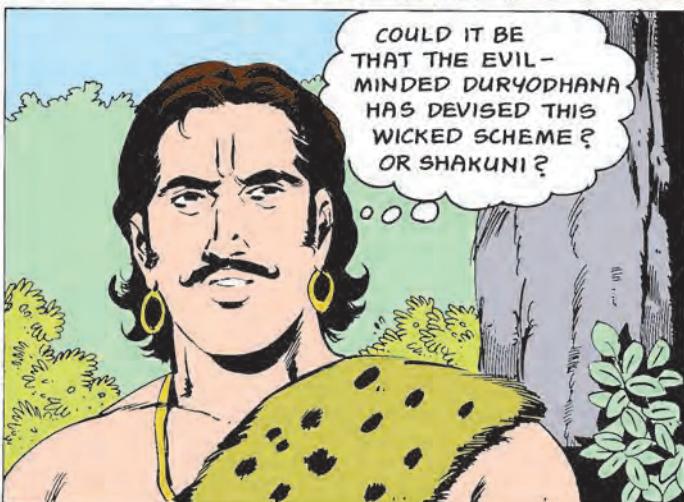
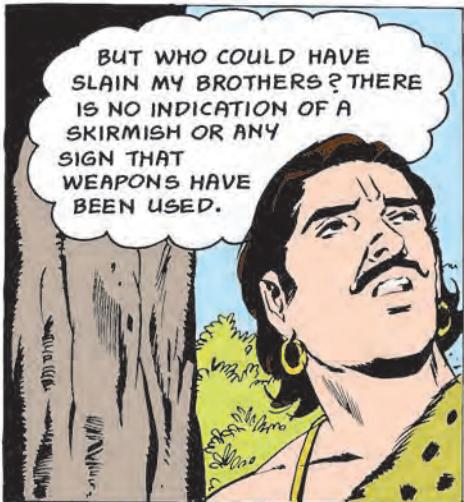
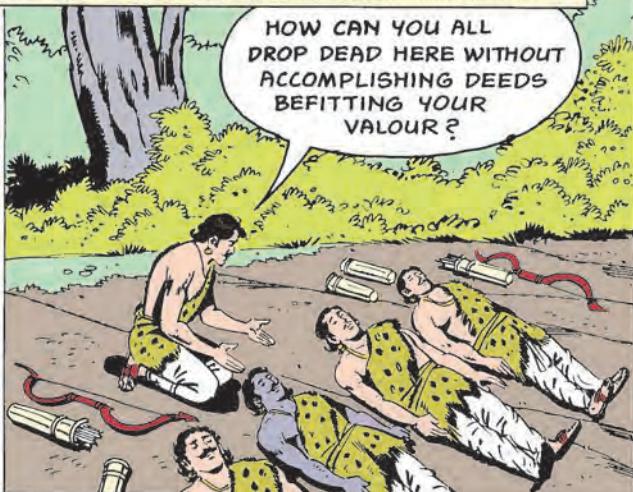
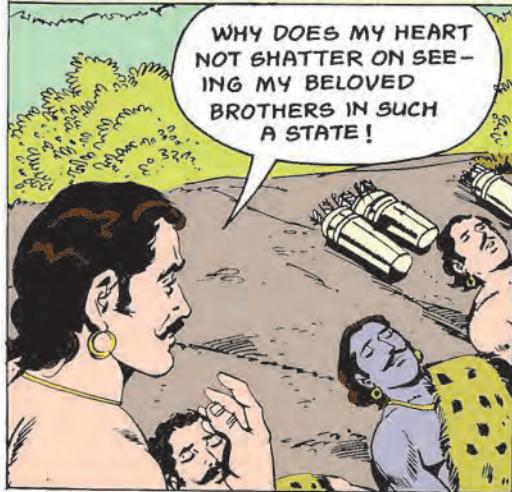
"SUDENLY —

AH! THAT MUST
BE THE LAKE. I CAN
SEE THE WATER
GLISTENING.

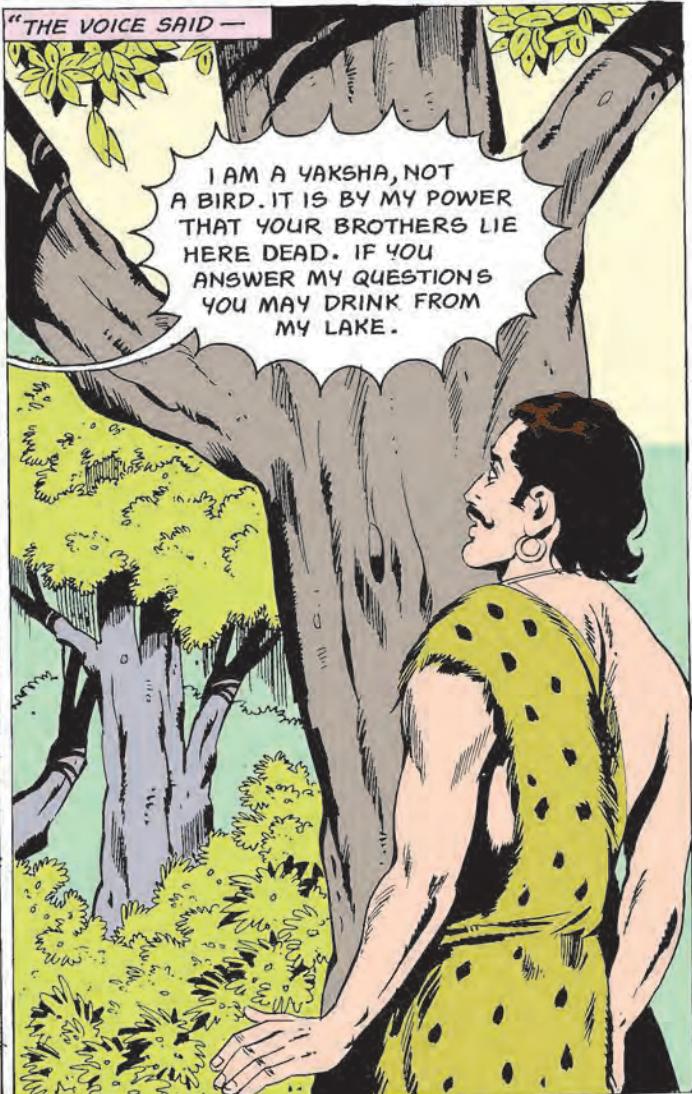
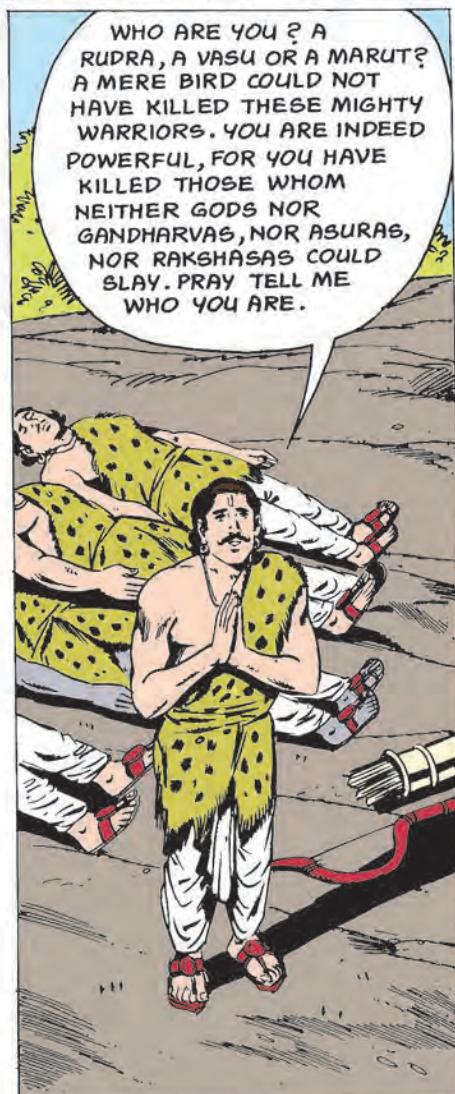
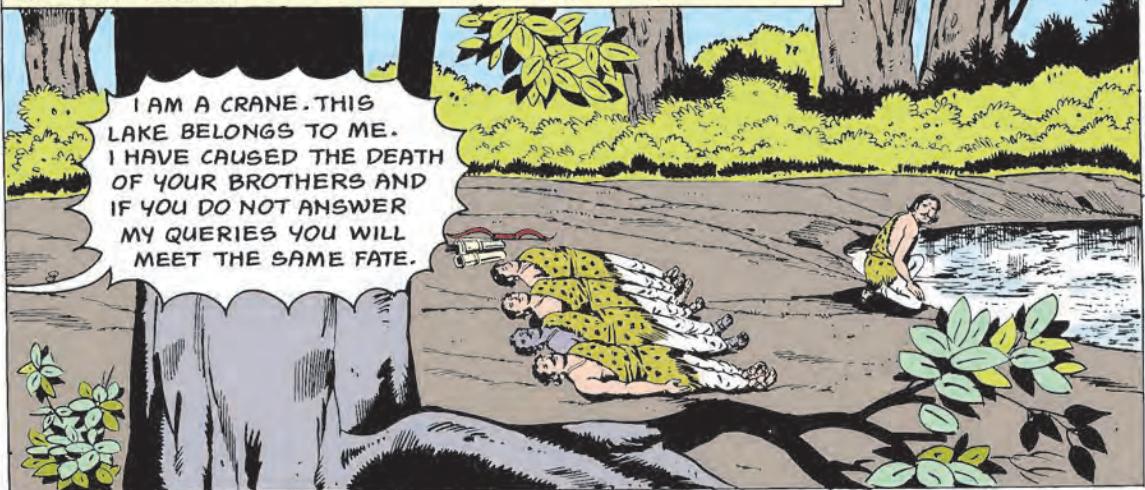
"BUT WHEN HE REACHED THERE —

MY BROTHERS!
WHAT IS WRONG
WITH THEM? ARE
THEY DEAD?

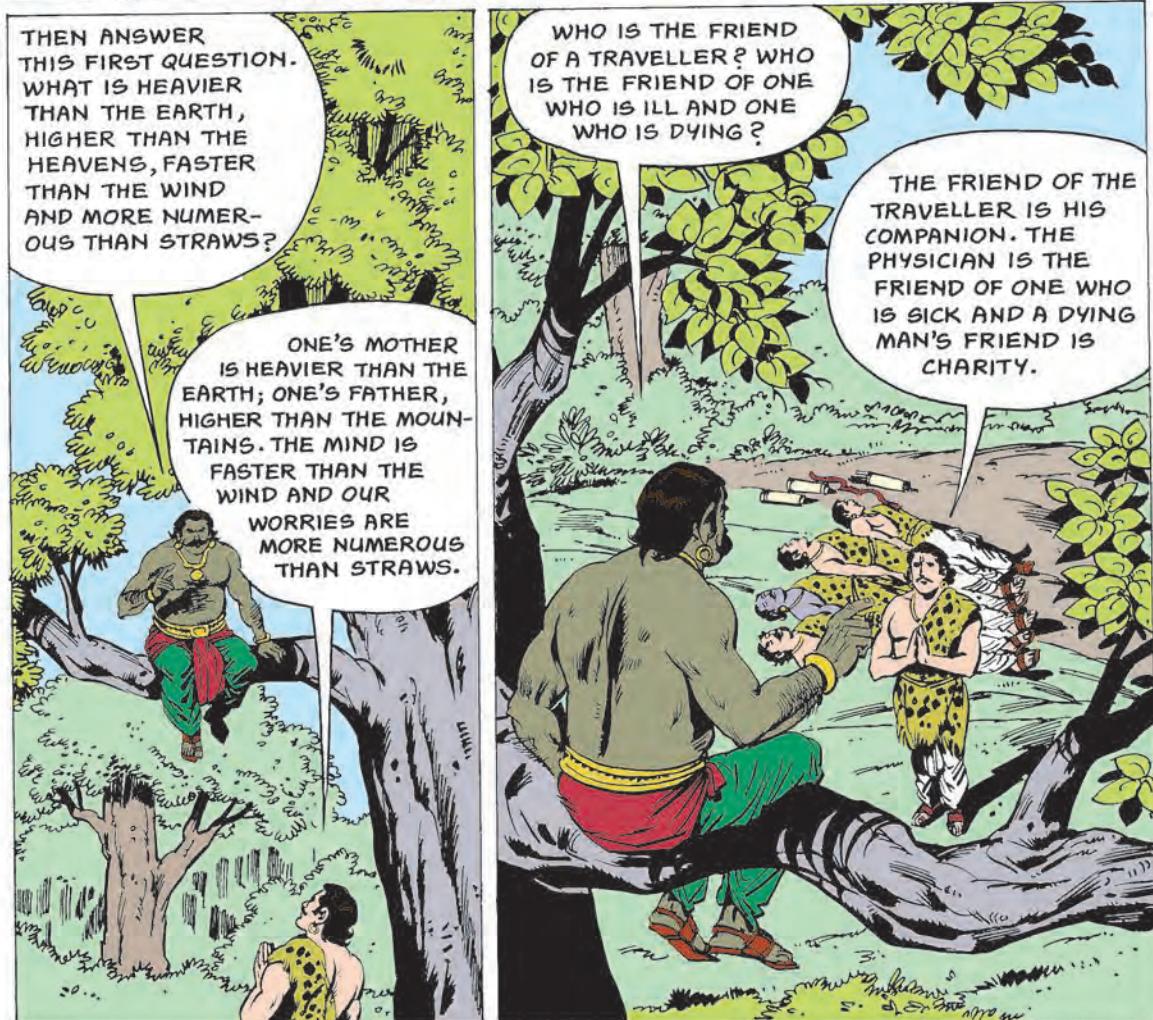
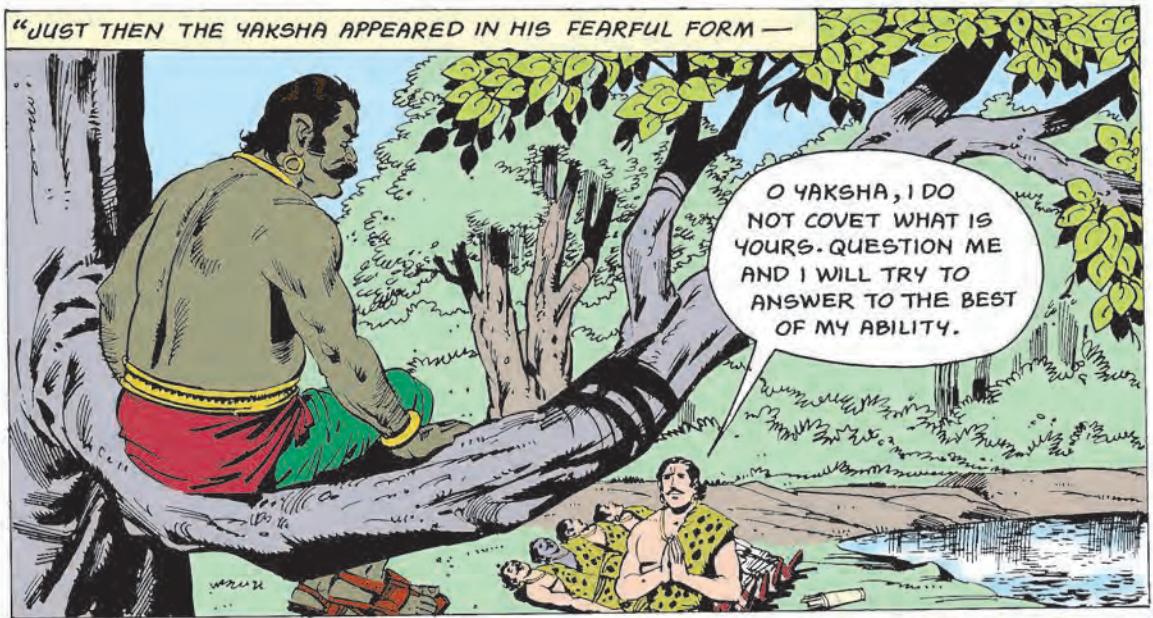
"BEHOLDING HIS BROTHERS LYING DEAD ON THE GROUND, YUDHISHTHIRA LAMENTED —

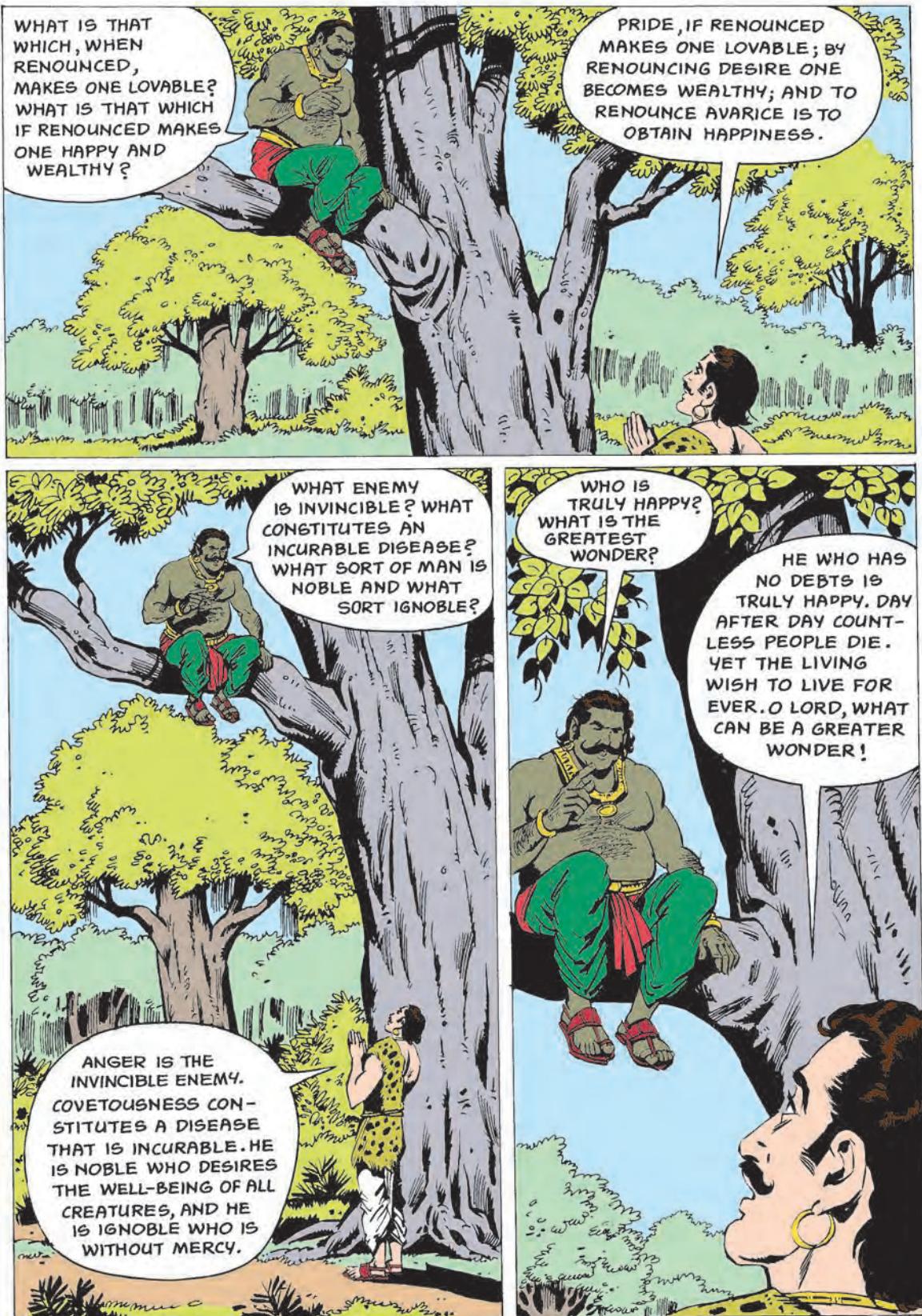


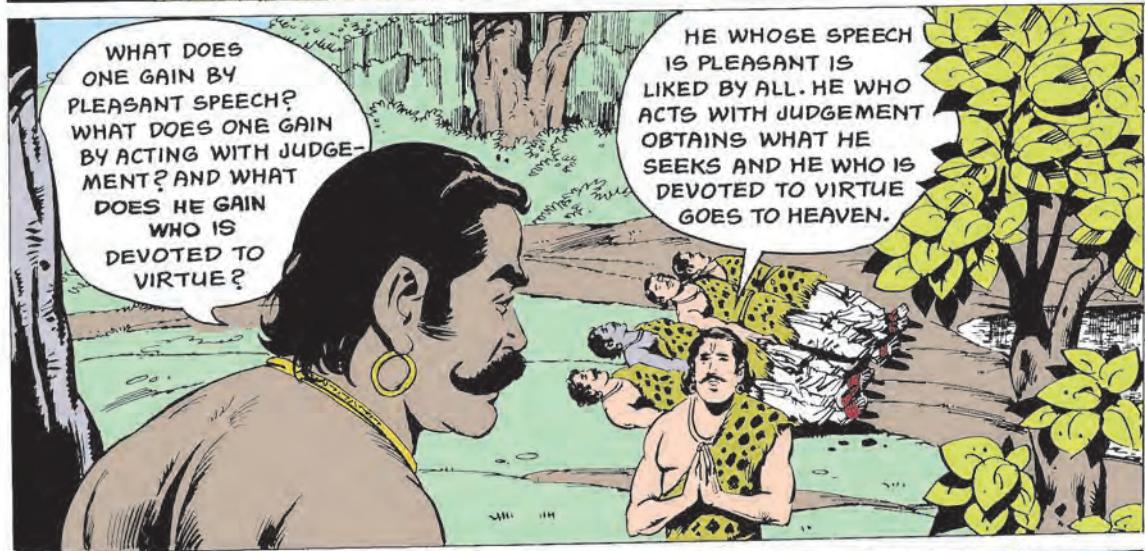
"AS YUDHISHTHIRA DESCENDED TO THE LAKE, HE HEARD A VOICE—

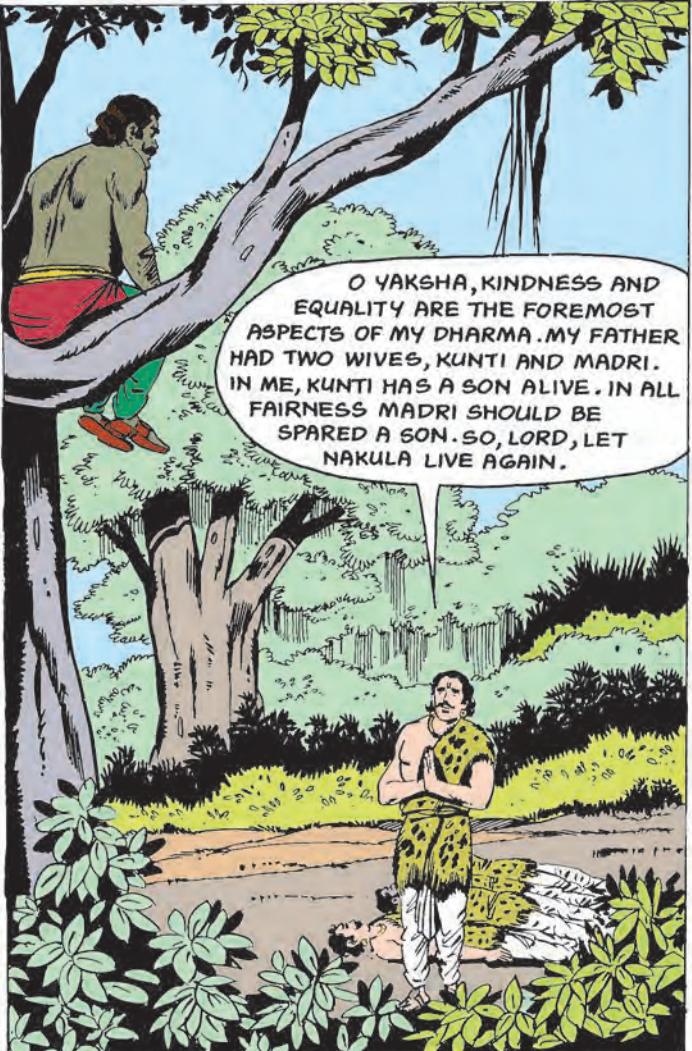
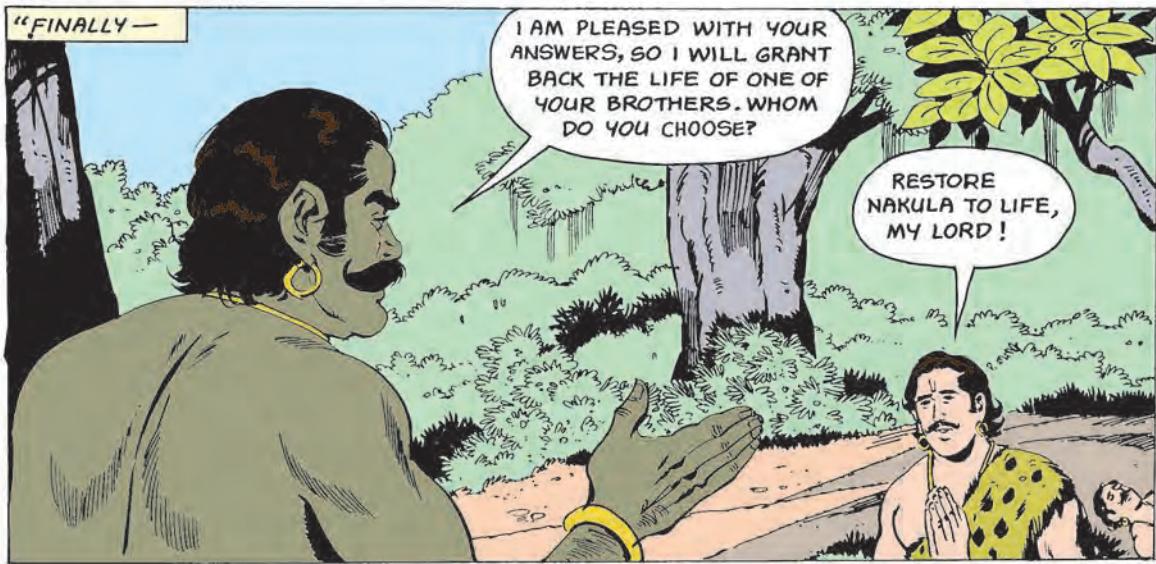


"JUST THEN THE YAKSHA APPEARED IN HIS FEARFUL FORM —

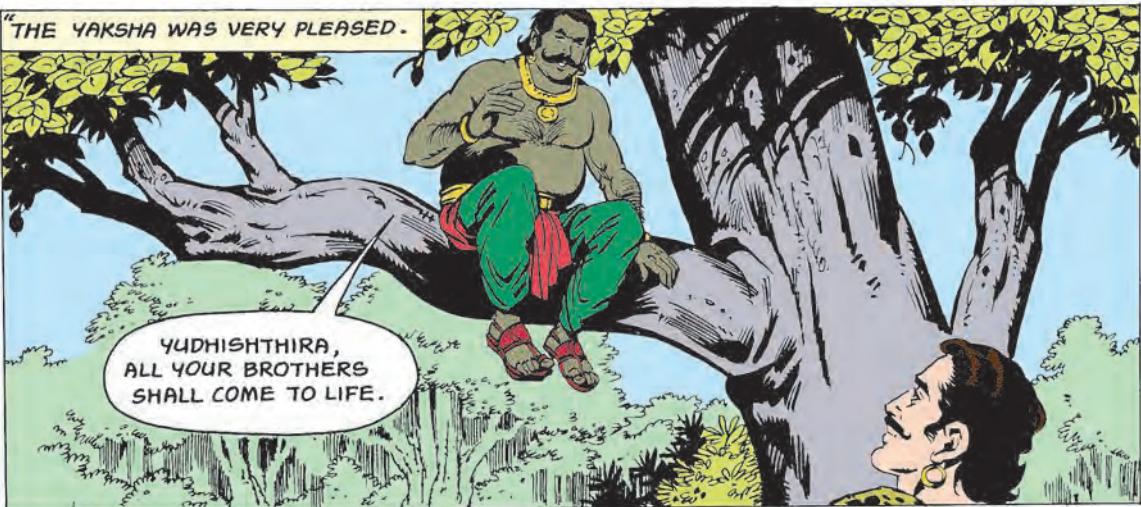




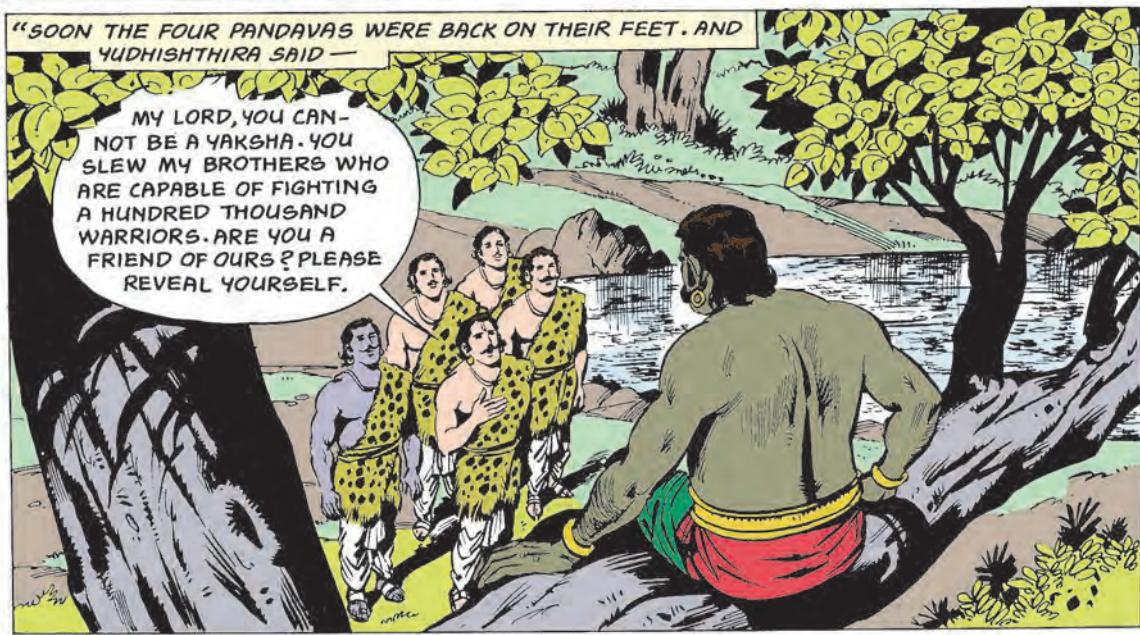




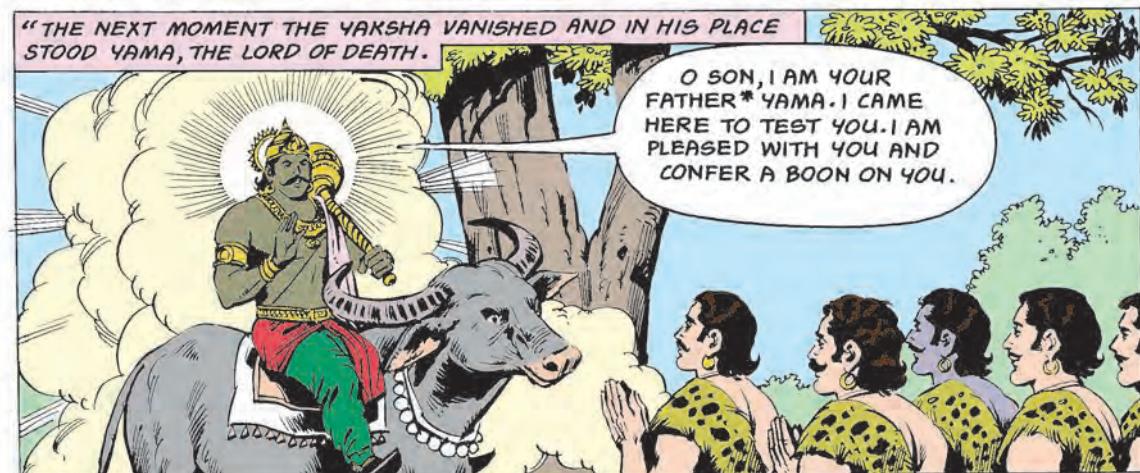
"THE YAKSHA WAS VERY PLEASED.



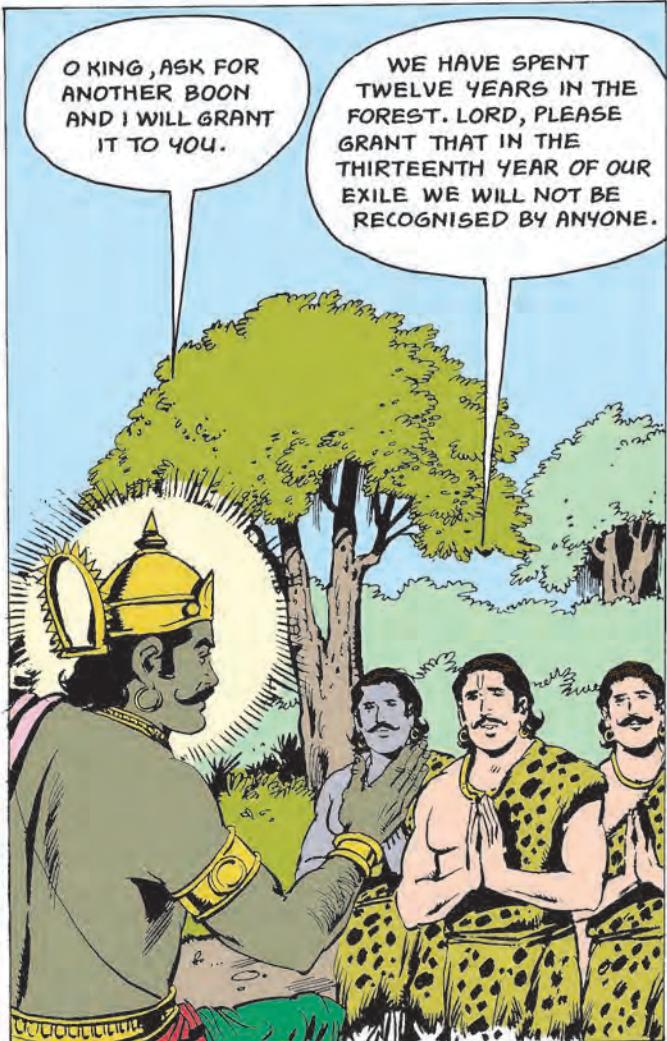
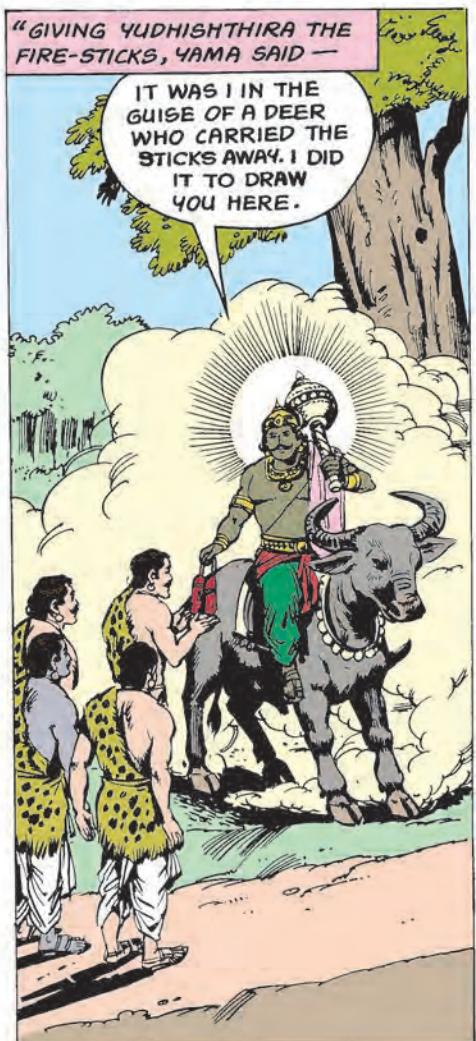
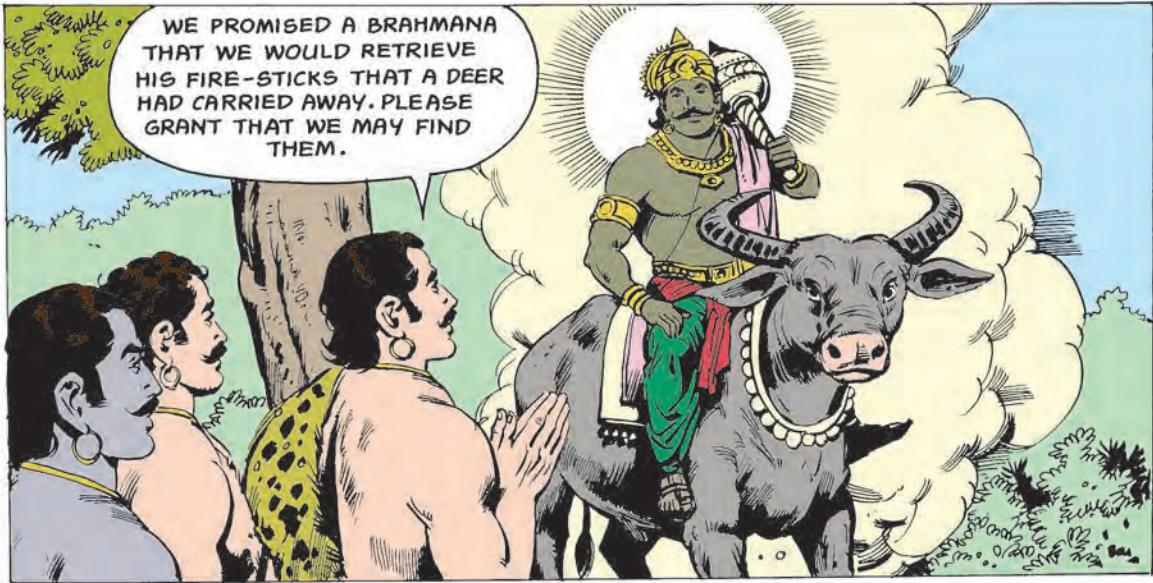
"SOON THE FOUR PANDAVAS WERE BACK ON THEIR FEET. AND YUDHISHTHIRA SAID —

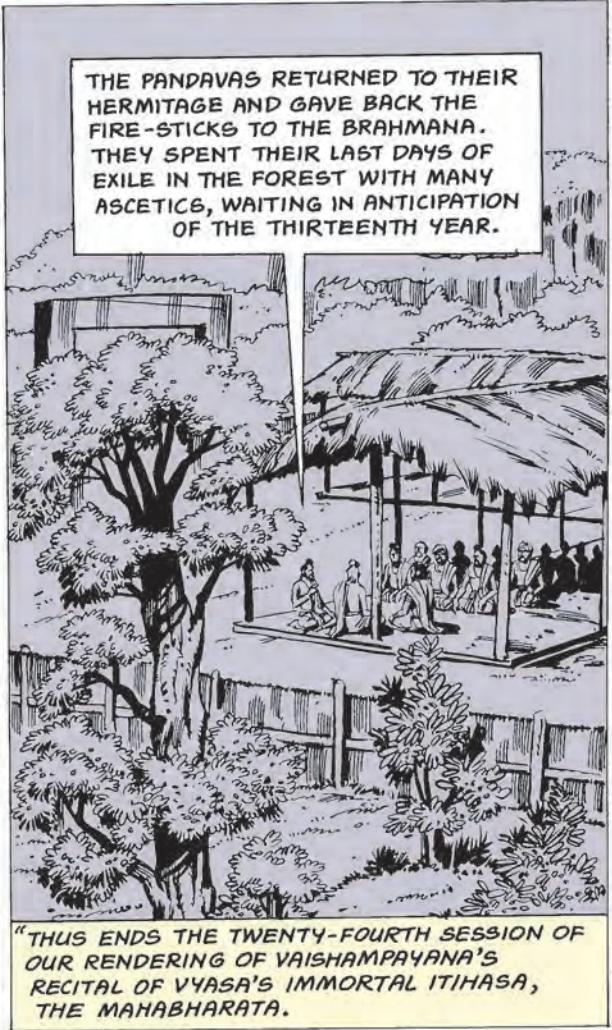
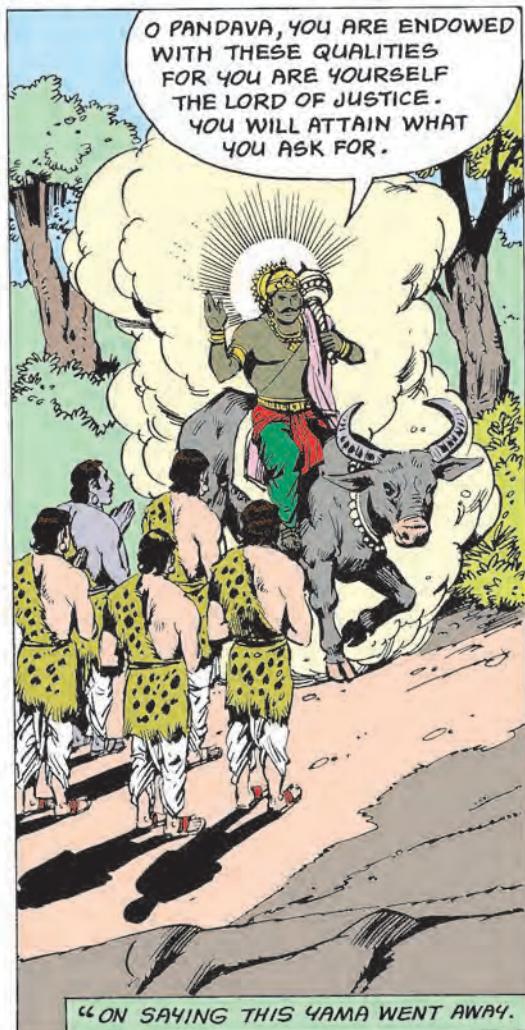
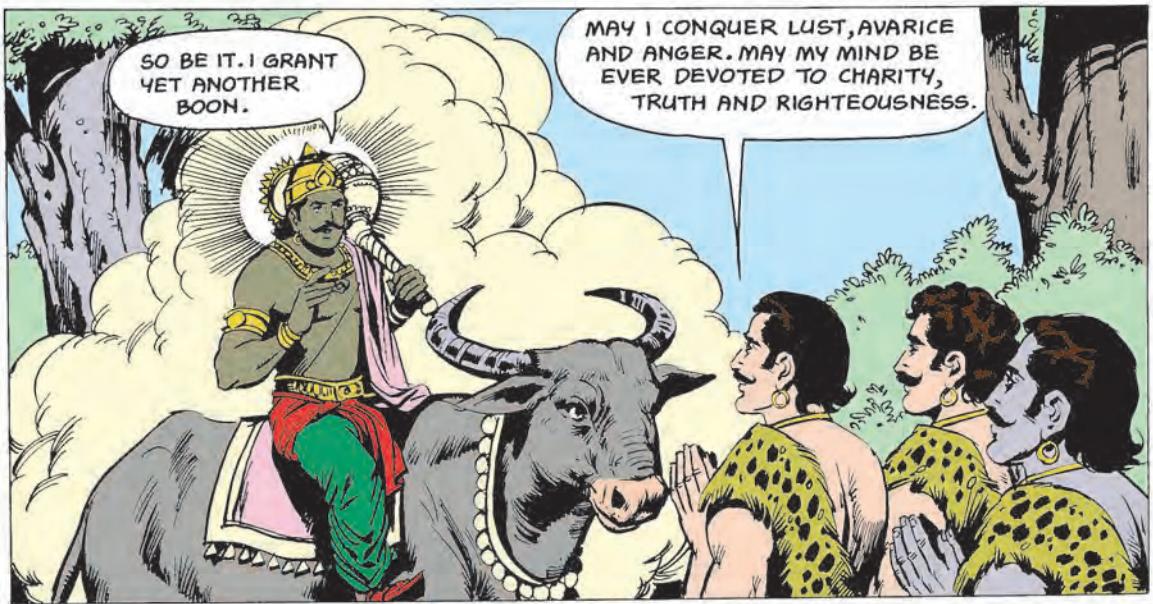


"THE NEXT MOMENT THE YAKSHA VANISHED AND IN HIS PLACE STOOD YAMA, THE LORD OF DEATH.



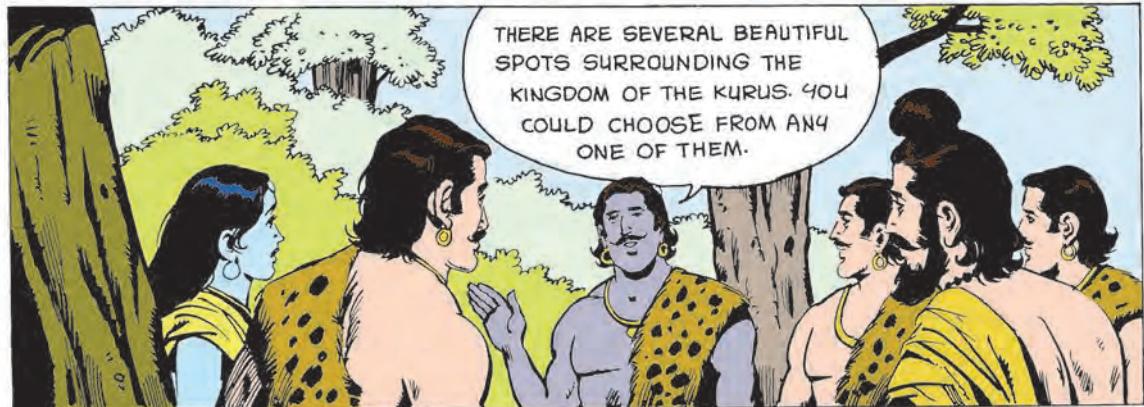
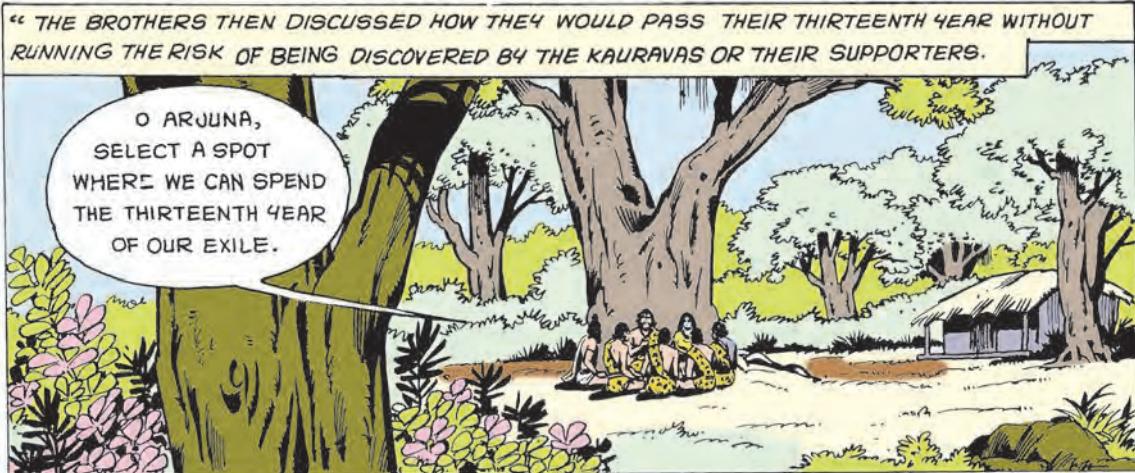
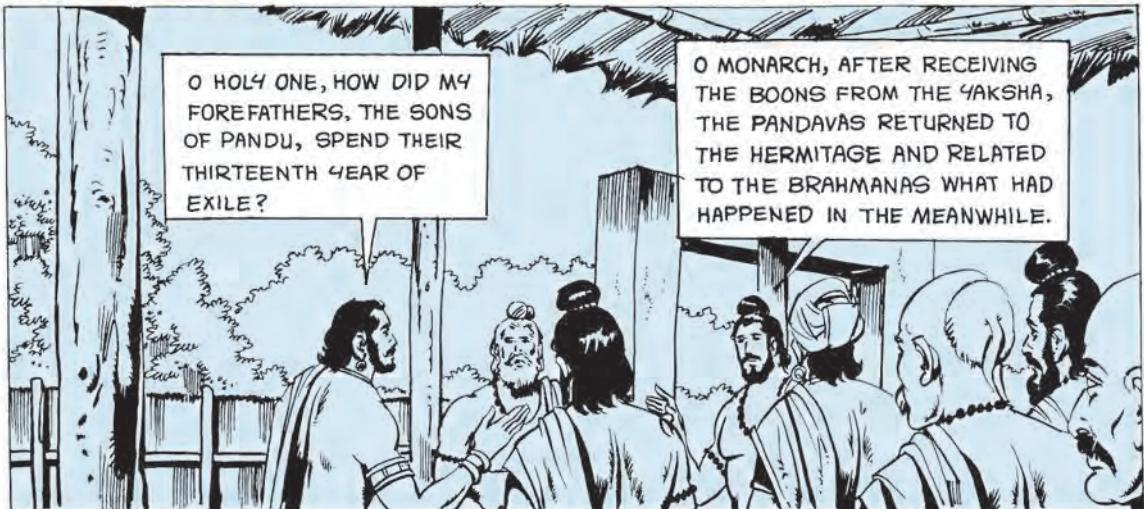
* YUDHISHTHIRA WAS BORN TO KUNTI BY THE GRACE OF YAMA.
SEE MAHABHARATA NO. 3





Mahabharata-25

THE PANDAVAS AT VIRATA'S PALACE



"YUDHISHTHIRA REPLIED —

ARJUNA, IT IS TRUE THAT BECAUSE OF THE YAKSHA'S BOON OUR DISGUISE WILL NOT BE DISCOVERED. BUT WE MUST SELECT A SPOT WHERE WE COULD LIVE FREE FROM FEAR AND WITHOUT BEING EXPOSED.

LET US GO TO THE KINGDOM OF THE AGED MATSYA KING, VIRATA. HE IS POWERFUL, VIRTUOUS, CHARITABLE AND WISHES WELL OF US.

WE COULD DISGUISE OURSELVES AND ENTER HIS SERVICE IN DIFFERENT CAPACITIES.

ARJUNA ASKED —

O VIRTUOUS ONE, YOU ARE MILD AND MODEST. IN WHAT MANNER DO YOU PROPOSE TO DISGUISE YOURSELF?

I SHALL PRESENT MYSELF AS A BRAHMANA WITH THE NAME KANKA, SKILLED IN DICE AND OTHER GAMES. I WILL TRY TO BECOME ONE OF THE COURTIERS OF KING VIRATA.

THE PANDAVAS AT VIRATA'S PALACE

"AND BHEEMA SAID—

I AM SKILLED IN THE CULINARY ART, SO I WILL GO AS A COOK, BEARING THE NAME BALLAVA. I WILL COOK MOUTH-WATERING DISHES TO PLEASE THE KING. AND, IF BIDDEN, I WILL TAKE PART IN DUELS FOR HIS AMUSEMENT.

"THEN YUDHISHTHIRA ASKED—

AND, MIGHTY ARJUNA, WHAT OFFICE WILL BE YOURS AT THE COURT OF VIRATA?

I WILL GO IN THE GUISE OF A EUNUCH* TO VIRATA'S KINGDOM. I SHALL CALL MYSELF BRIHANNALA AND ENTERTAIN THE KING AND HIS COURTiers. I COULD ALSO BE A DANCE TEACHER TO THE WOMEN OF THE PALACE.

NAKULA, TELL US YOUR PLANS.

UNDER THE NAME GRANTHIKA, I WILL LOOK AFTER KING VIRATA'S HORSES.

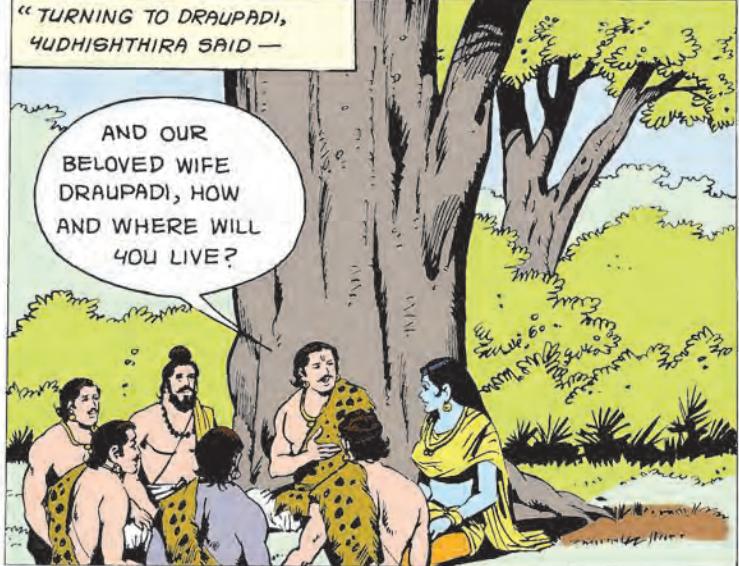
*ARJUNA HAD BEEN CURSED BY URVASHI (MAHABHARATA—21) THAT HE WOULD HAVE TO LIVE BEREFT OF MANHOOD.

"AND SAHADEVA SAID—

SINCE I AM SKILLED
AT MILKING AND TAMING
COWS, I WILL LOOK
AFTER THE ROYAL HERD.
I SHALL CALL MYSELF
TANTIPALA.

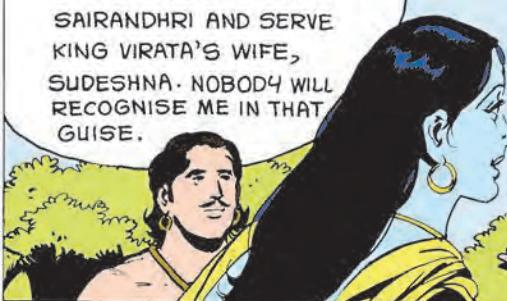
"TURNING TO DRAUPADI,
YUDHISHTHIRA SAID—

AND OUR
BELOVED WIFE
DRAUPADI, HOW
AND WHERE WILL
YOU LIVE?



"DRAUPADI REPLIED—

MY LORD, THERE IS
A CLASS OF VIRTUOUS
WOMEN CALLED SAIRANDHRIS.
I WILL DRESS AS A
SAIRANDHRI AND SERVE
KING VIRATA'S WIFE,
SUDESHNA. NOBODY WILL
RECOGNISE ME IN THAT
GUAISE.

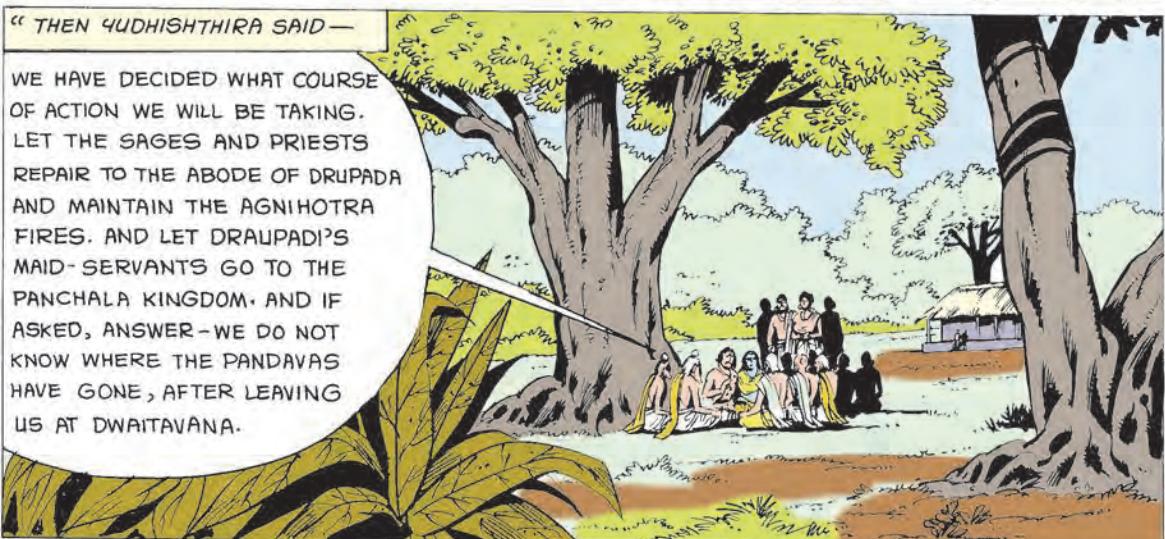


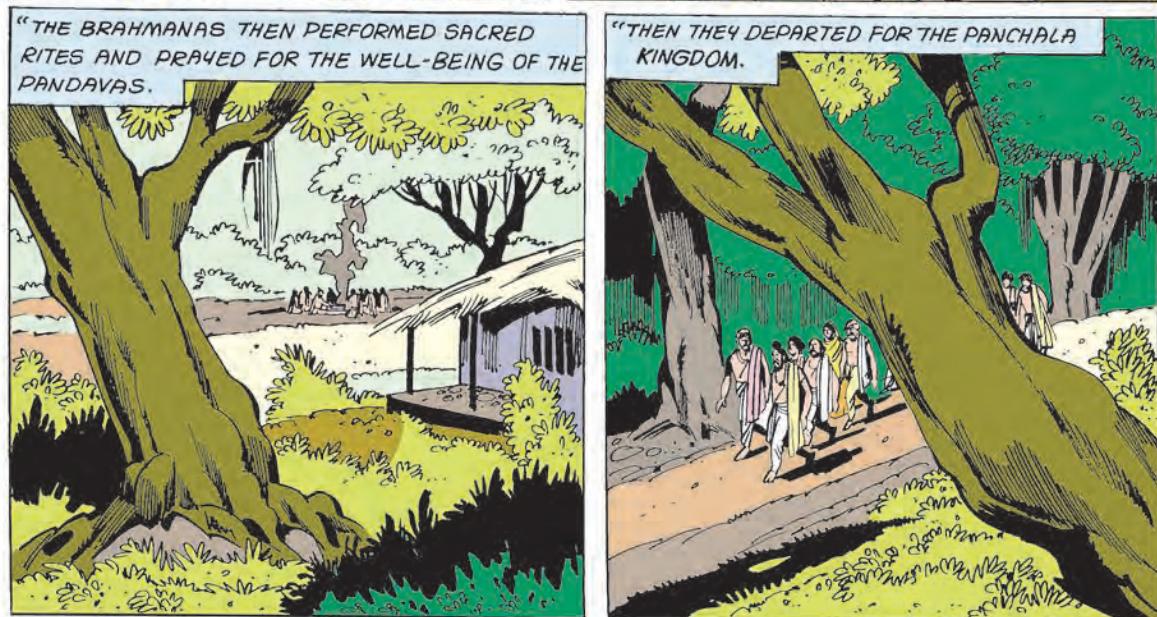
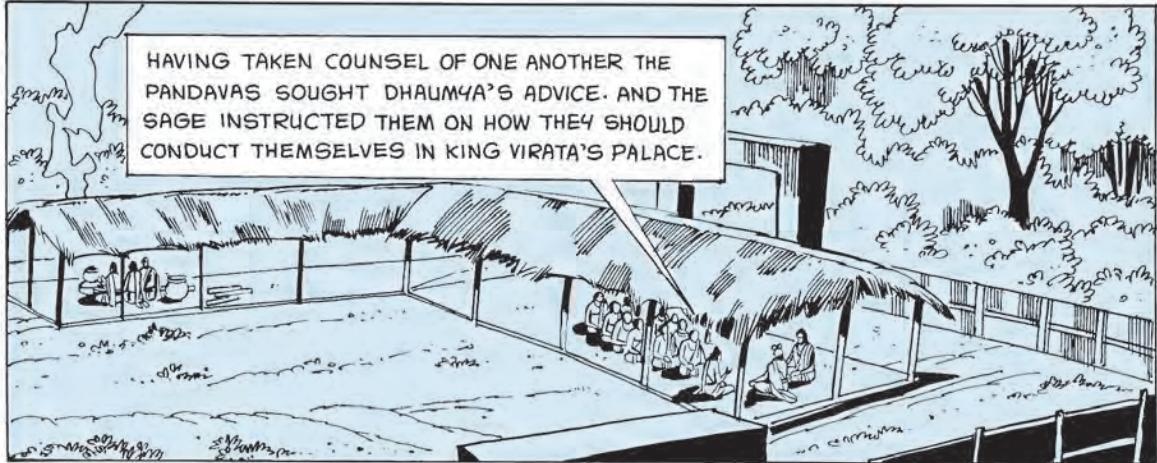
O FAIR MAIDEN, YOU
HAVE SPOKEN WELL.
CONDUCT YOURSELF
THERE IN SUCH A
WAY THAT OUR
ENEMIES NEVER
RECOGNISE
YOU.



"THEN YUDHISHTHIRA SAID—

WE HAVE DECIDED WHAT COURSE
OF ACTION WE WILL BE TAKING.
LET THE SAGES AND PRIESTS
REPAIR TO THE ABODE OF DRUPADA
AND MAINTAIN THE AGNIHOTRA
FIRES. AND LET DRAUPADI'S
MAID-SERVANTS GO TO THE
PANCHALA KINGDOM. AND IF
ASKED, ANSWER—WE DO NOT
KNOW WHERE THE PANDAVAS
HAVE GONE, AFTER LEAVING
US AT DWAITAVANA.





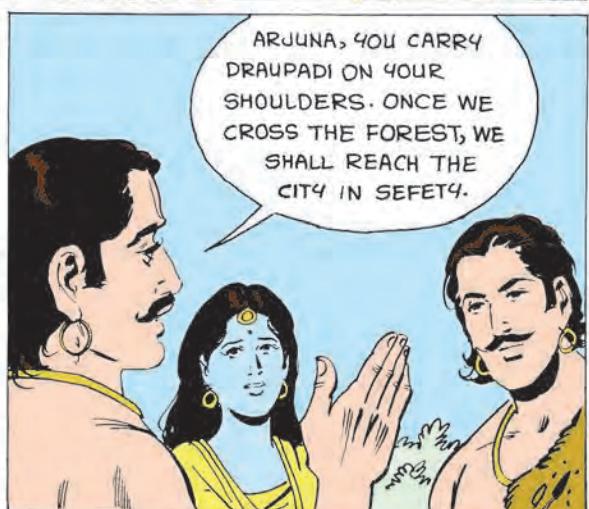
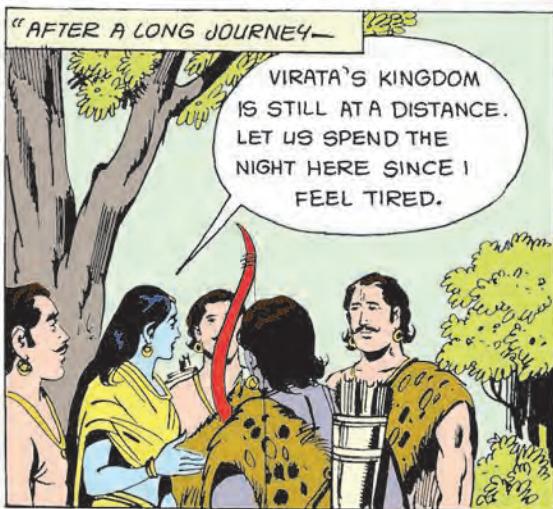
"AS FOR THE PANDAVAS THEY PROCEEDED IN THE DIRECTION OF THE RIVER YAMUNA.



"AFTER A LONG JOURNEY—

VIRATA'S KINGDOM
IS STILL AT A DISTANCE.
LET US SPEND THE
NIGHT HERE SINCE I
FEEL TIRED.

ARJUNA, YOU CARRY
DRAUPADI ON YOUR
SHOULDERS. ONCE WE
CROSS THE FOREST, WE
SHALL REACH THE
CITY IN SAFETY.

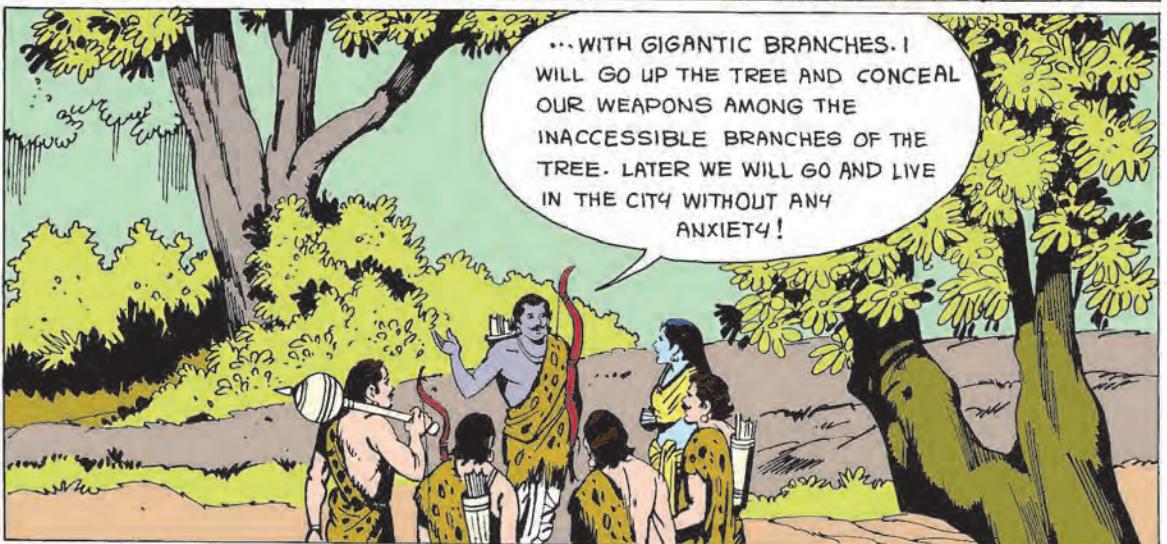
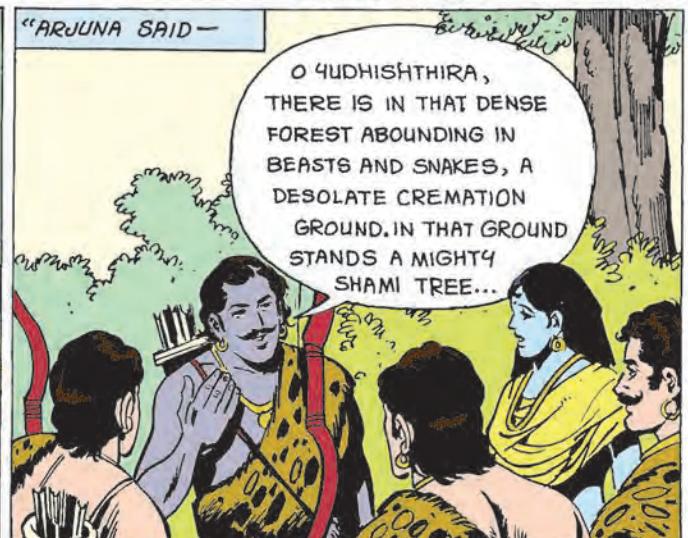
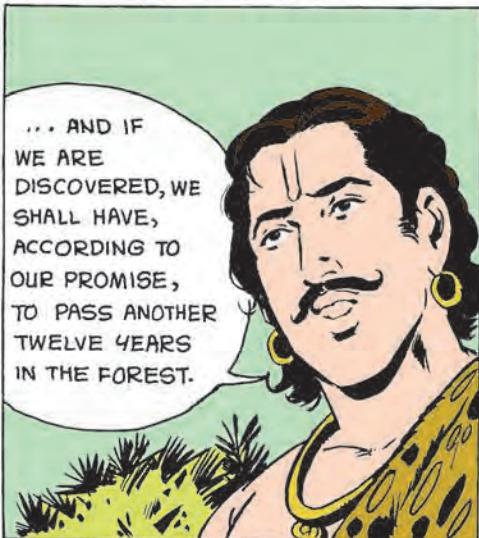
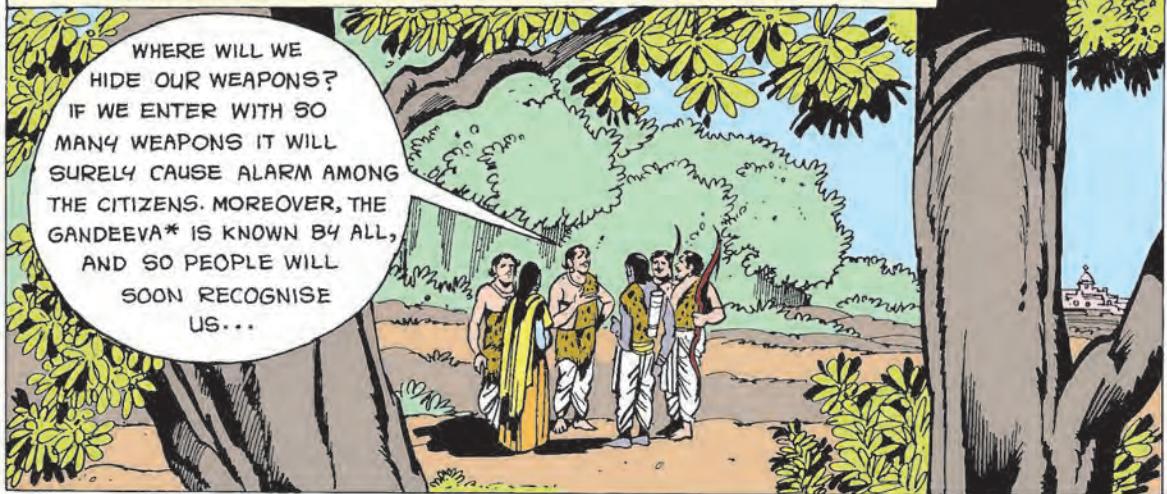


"THEREUPON THE PANDAVAS CONTINUED THEIR TRAVEL, WITH DRAUPADI BEING
CARRIED BY ARJUNA ON HIS SHOULDERS.



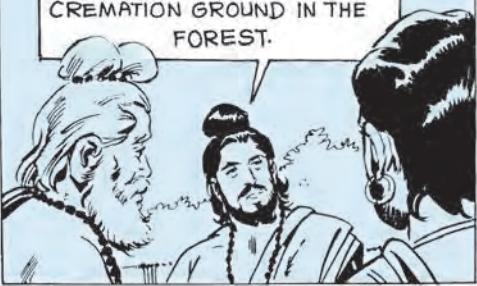
THE PANDAVAS AT VIRATA'S PALACE

"ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE CITY, YUDHISHTHIRA ADDRESSED ARJUNA —



* ARJUNA'S BOW

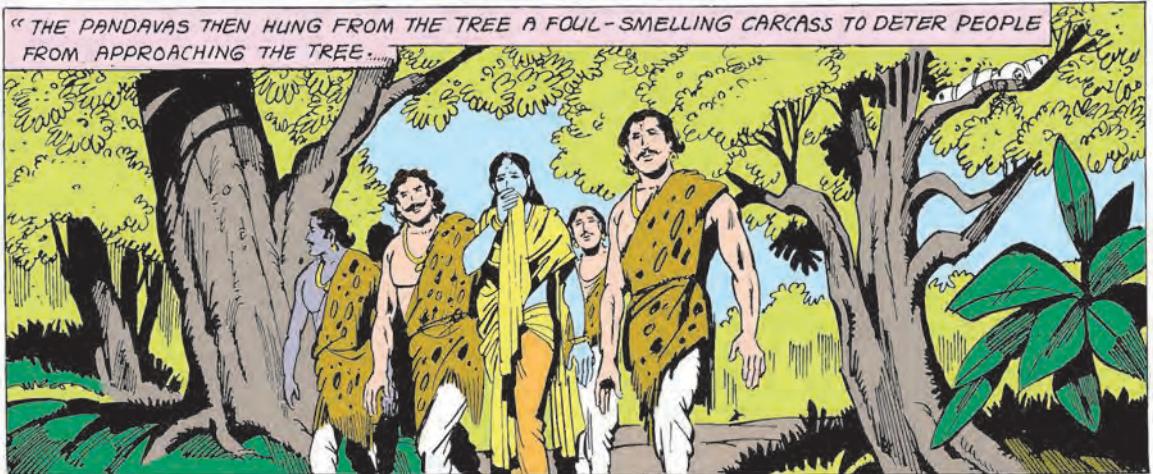
THEREAFTER THE PANDAVAS DIVESTED THEMSELVES OF THEIR WEAPONS. THE MIGHTY CELESTIAL WEAPONS WERE GATHERED AND TAKEN TO THE CREMATION GROUND IN THE FOREST.



"NAKULA ASCENDED THE TREE AND SECURED THE WEAPONS TO THE BRANCHES WHICH WERE STRONG AND WHICH COULD RESIST RAIN AND WIND."



"THE PANDAVAS THEN HUNG FROM THE TREE A FOUL-SMELLING CARCASS TO DETER PEOPLE FROM APPROACHING THE TREE."

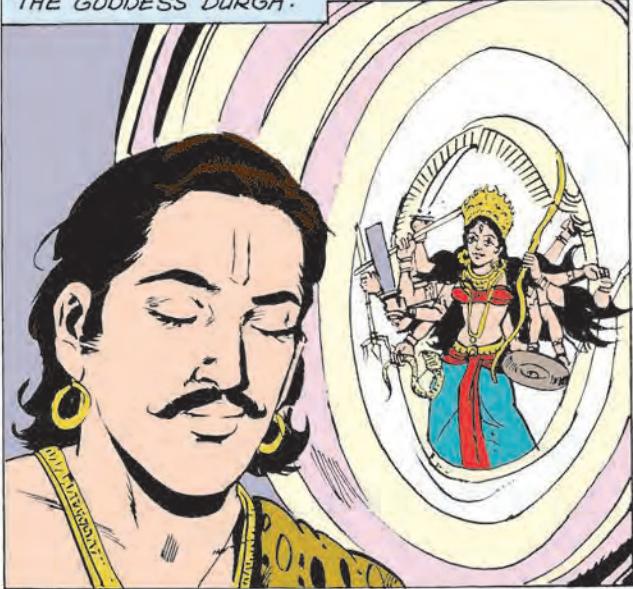


THE PANDAVAS AT VIRATA'S PALACE

"SATISFIED WITH THEIR WORK, THEY TURNED TOWARDS THE KINGDOM OF VIRATA.



"YUDHISHTHIRA'S MIND WAS FULL OF PRAISES OF THE GODDESS DURGA.



"HE AND HIS BROTHERS TOGETHER WITH DRAUPADI, DESIROUS OF OBTAINING A VISION OF THE GODDESS, INVOKED HER BY RECITING VARIOUS HYMNS.



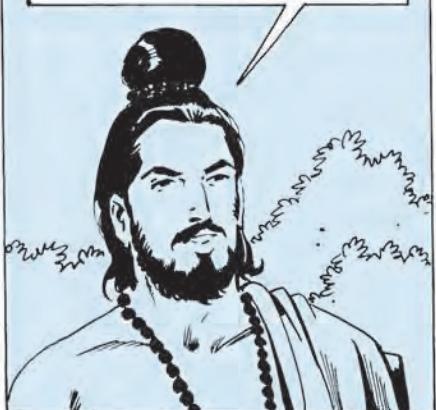
"PRAISED BY THE SONS OF PANDU, THE GODDESS APPEARED BEFORE THEM.



YOU SHALL RULE OVER THE EARTH ONCE MORE AND JOY AND HEALTH WILL BE YOURS. AND THROUGH MY GRACE NEITHER THE KURU SPIES NOR THOSE THAT DWELL IN THE COUNTRY OF THE MATSYAS WILL SUCCEED IN RECOGNISING YOU ALL AS LONG AS YOU RESIDE IN VIRATA'S CITY.



AFTER THIS, THE PANDAVAS WENT IN DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS, EACH TO TAKE UP HIS NEW SERVICE FOR THE PERIOD OF ONE YEAR.

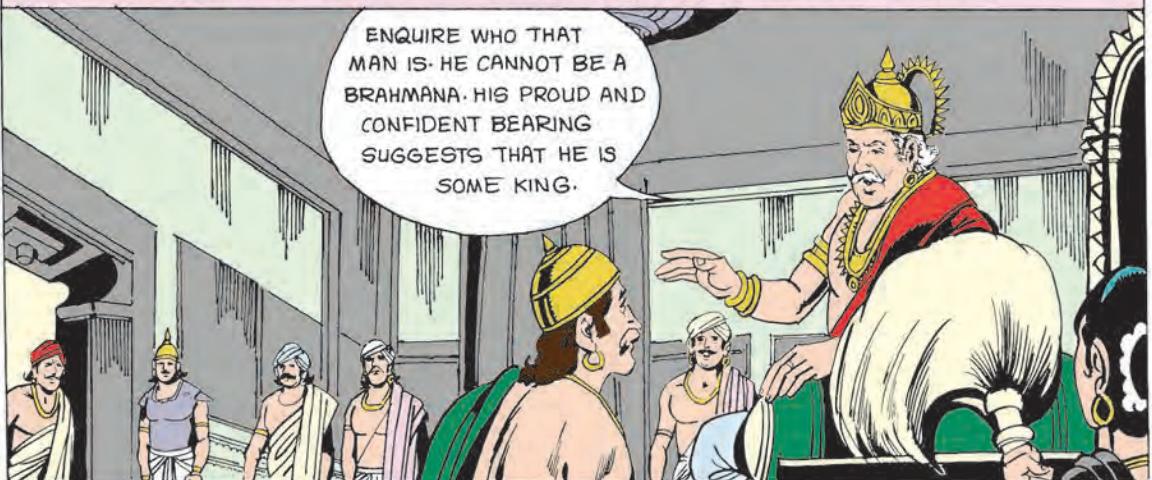


"YUDHISHTHIRA WRAPPED HIS DICE OF GOLD IN A PIECE OF CLOTH AND PROCEEDED TOWARDS THE COURT OF VIRATA.



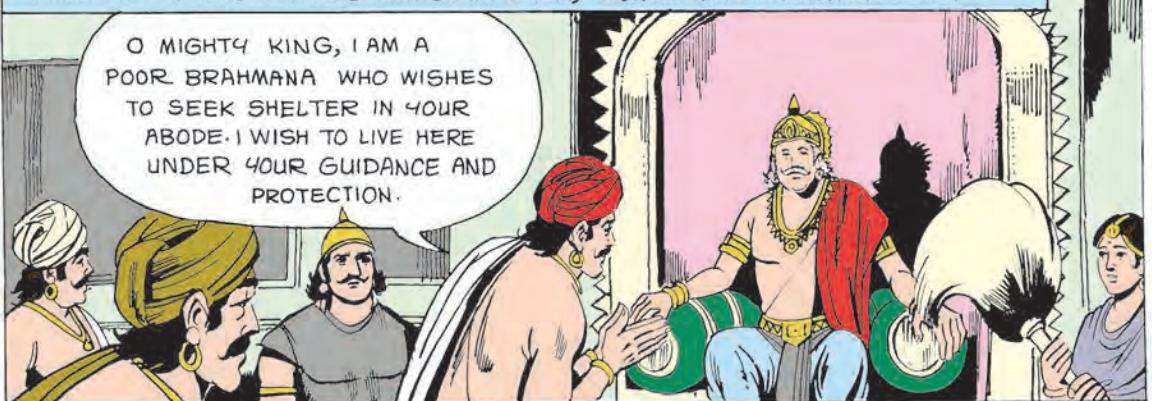
"AT THE COURT, KING VIRATA WAS VERY IMPRESSED BY YUDHISHTHIRA'S APPEARANCE.

ENQUIRE WHO THAT MAN IS. HE CANNOT BE A BRAHMANA. HIS PROUD AND CONFIDENT BEARING SUGGESTS THAT HE IS SOME KING.



"WHILE VIRATA WAS TALKING TO HIS MINISTER, YUDHISHTHIRA APPROACHED HIM —

O MIGHTY KING, I AM A POOR BRAHMANA WHO WISHES TO SEEK SHELTER IN YOUR ABODE. I WISH TO LIVE HERE UNDER YOUR GUIDANCE AND PROTECTION.



THE PANDAVAS AT VIRATA'S PALACE

"VIRATA WAS VERY PLEASED.

YOU ARE WELCOME, SIR. BUT TELL ME, WHO ARE YOU? FROM WHERE DO YOU COME? AND, TELL ME, IN WHAT SUBJECT OR OCCUPATION YOU HAVE GAINED PROFICIENCY.

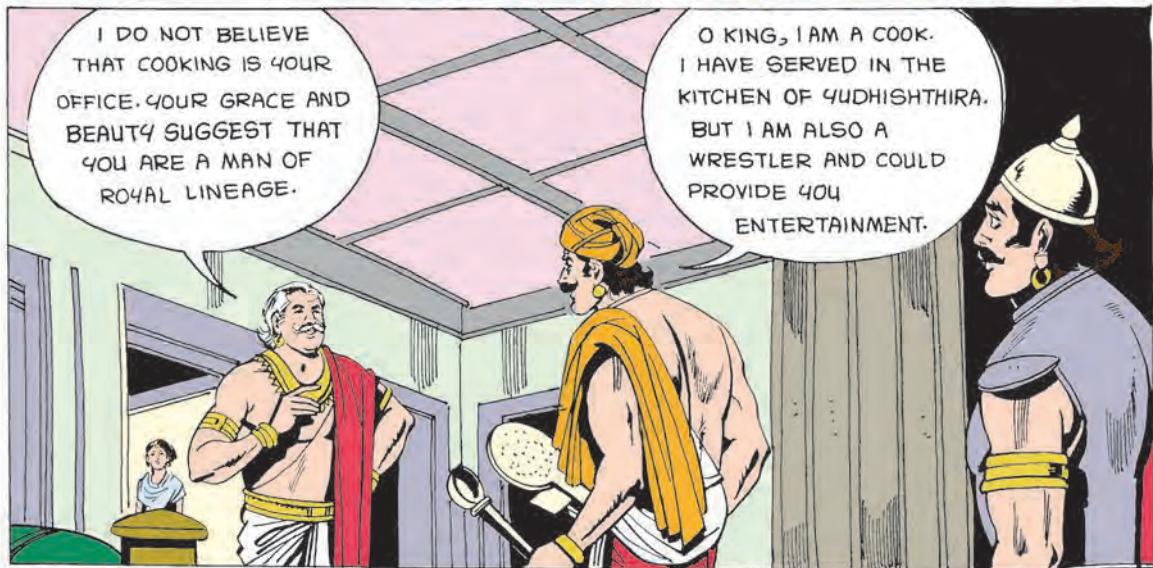
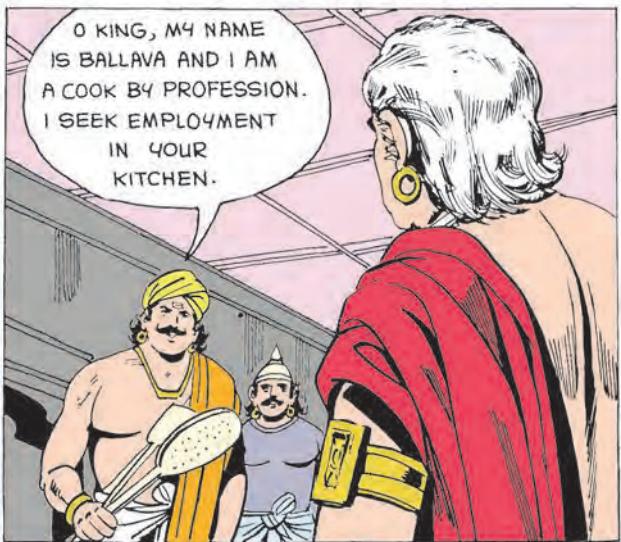
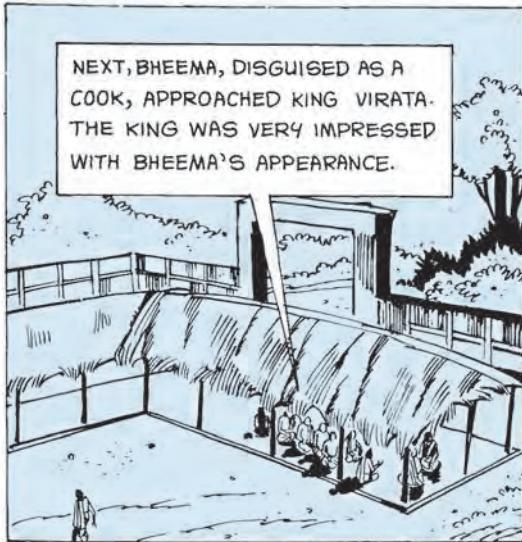
MY NAME IS KANKA, AND I AM A BRAHMANA BELONGING TO THE VAIGAGHRA FAMILY. I AM SKILLED IN CASTING DICE. FORMERLY I WAS A FRIEND OF YUDHISHTHIRA'S.

I WILL GRANT YOU WHATEVER BOON YOU ASK.

MY LORD, MY FIRST WISH IS THAT I MAY NOT BE INVOLVED IN ANY GAMBLING DISPUTES WITH LOW PEOPLE. FURTHER, I MAY BE PERMITTED TO KEEP ANY GAINS MADE BY ME IN THE COURSE OF GAMBLING.

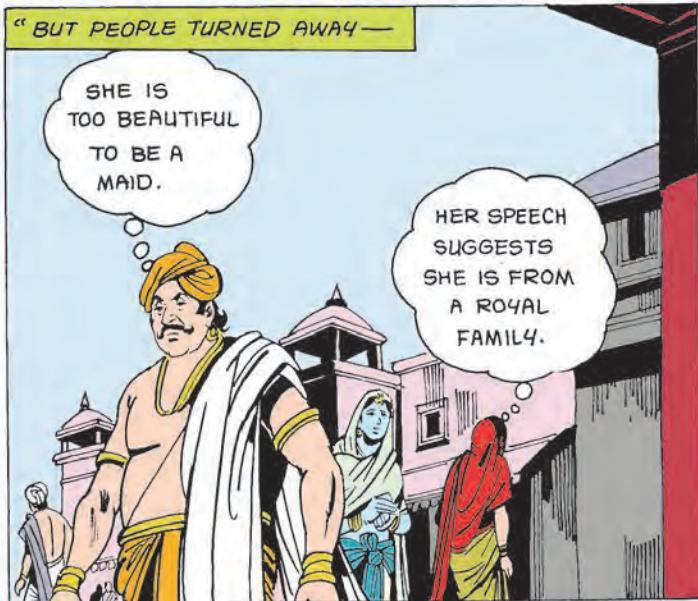
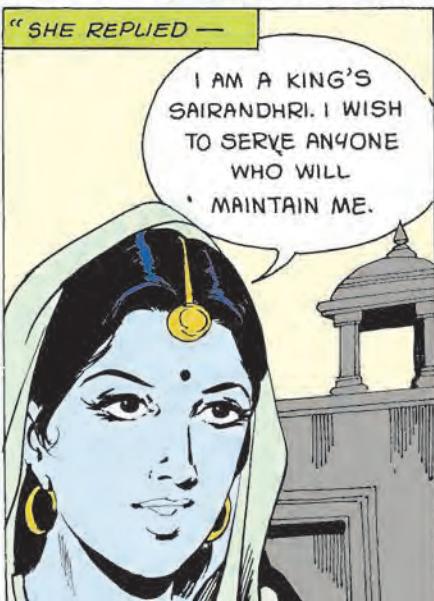
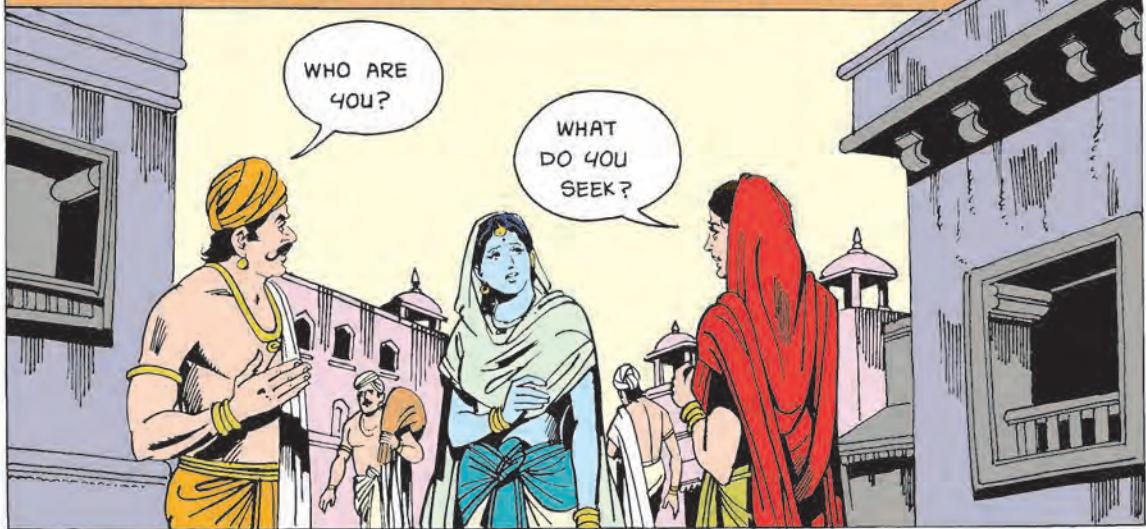
"VIRATA THEN PROCLAIMED—

ALL THE ASSEMBLED SUBJECTS, LISTEN! FROM TODAY KANKA IS AS MUCH LORD OF THE REALM AS MYSELF. HE SHALL RIDE WITH ME AND HAVE ALL PLEASURES AT HIS DISPOSAL. HE SHALL LOOK AFTER THE AFFAIRS OF STATE AND ANYONE WHO DARES TO CAUSE HIM DISPLEASURE SHALL BE PUNISHED.

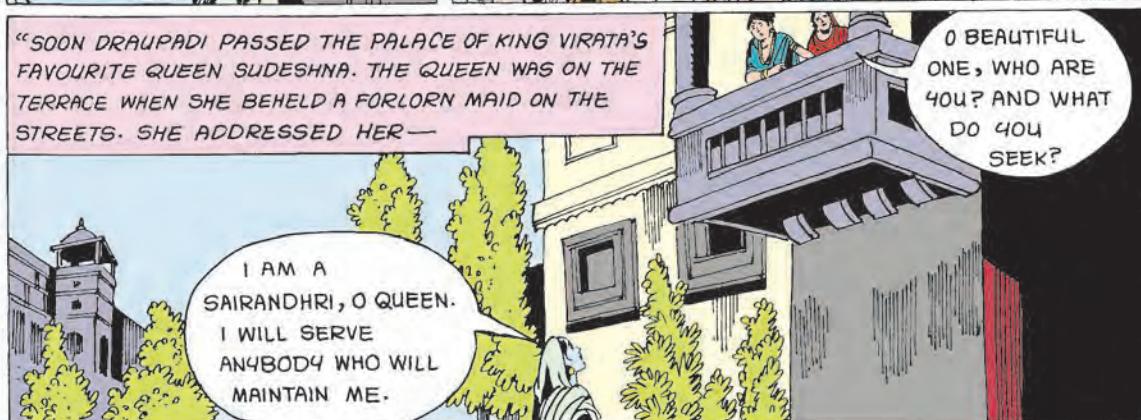


THE PANDAVAS AT VIRATA'S PALACE

"WHILE THE BROTHERS WERE SEEKING EMPLOYMENT WITH THE KING, DRAUPADI WANDERED THE STREETS OF THE CITY, WEARING A HARASSED LOOK.



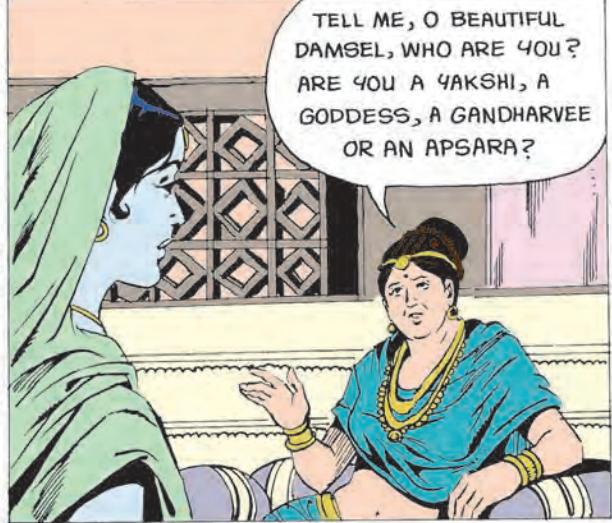
"SOON DRAUPADI PASSED THE PALACE OF KING VIRATA'S FAVOURITE QUEEN SUDESHNA. THE QUEEN WAS ON THE TERRACE WHEN SHE BEHELD A FORLORN MAID ON THE STREETS. SHE ADDRESSED HER —



"LATER IN THE QUEEN'S CHAMBER—

WHAT YOU SAY IS HARD TO BELIEVE. YOUR COUNTENANCE IS LIKE THE FULL MOON, AND YOUR EYES RESEMBLE THE PETALS OF A LOTUS. IN FACT YOU RESEMBLE THE GODDESS LAKSHMI HERSELF.

TELL ME, O BEAUTIFUL DAMSEL, WHO ARE YOU? ARE YOU A YAKSHI, A GODDESS, A GANDHARVEE OR AN APSARA?



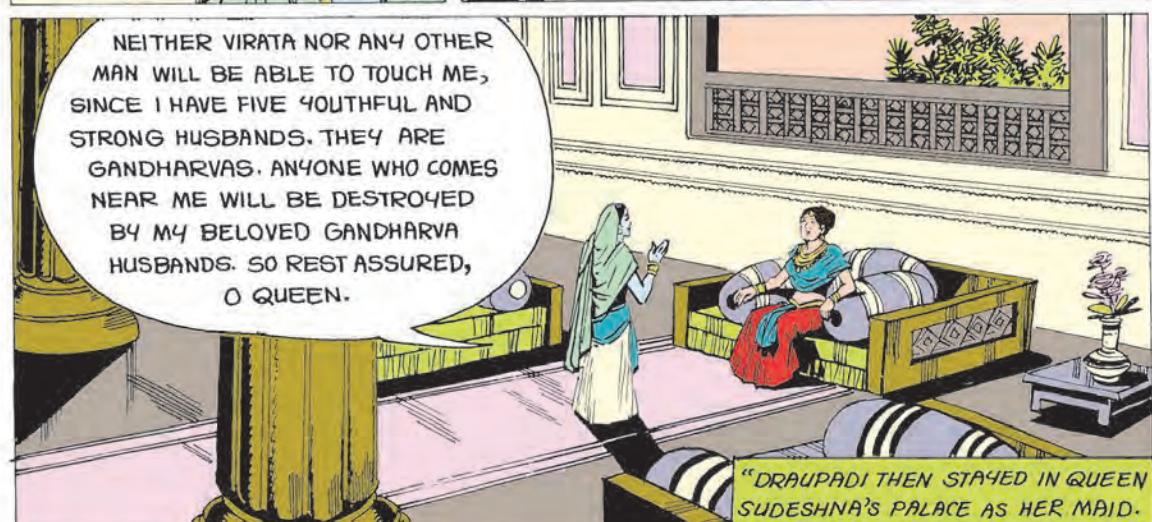
O QUEEN, I AM A MERE MAID-SERVANT AND AM CAPABLE OF LOOKING AFTER YOUR NEEDS. I HAVE SERVED PRINCESS DRAUPADI AND SHE HERSELF CALLED ME MALINI*.

MALINI, I WOULD EMPLOY YOU IF A CERTAIN DOUBT DID NOT TROUBLE ME. I FEAR THE KING MAY BE ATTRACTED BY YOUR BEAUTY AND LEAVE ME. WOULD IT BE WISE FOR ME TO BRING DESTRUCTION UPON MYSELF?



NEITHER VIRATA NOR ANY OTHER MAN WILL BE ABLE TO TOUCH ME, SINCE I HAVE FIVE YOUTHFUL AND STRONG HUSBANDS. THEY ARE GANDHARVAS. ANYONE WHO COMES NEAR ME WILL BE DESTROYED BY MY BELOVED GANDHARVA HUSBANDS. SO REST ASSURED, O QUEEN.

"DRAUPADI THEN STAYED IN QUEEN SUDESHNA'S PALACE AS HER MAID.



O HOLY ONE, WHAT DID THE TWINS NAKULA AND SAHADEVA DO IN THE MATSYA KINGDOM? AND WHAT ABOUT ARJUNA?

SAHADEVA, O MONARCH, WAS EMPLOYED BY KING VIRATA AS A COWHERD, WHILE NAKULA WAS PUT IN CHARGE OF THE ROYAL HORSES.

"NOW THAT HIS BROTHERS HAD FOUND EMPLOYMENT IN VIRATA'S KINGDOM, ARJUNA APPROACHED THE KING.

"DRESSED AS A EUNUCH WEARING BANGLES, EAR-RINGS AND SPORTING LONG HAIR, ARJUNA ADDRESSED KING VIRATA.

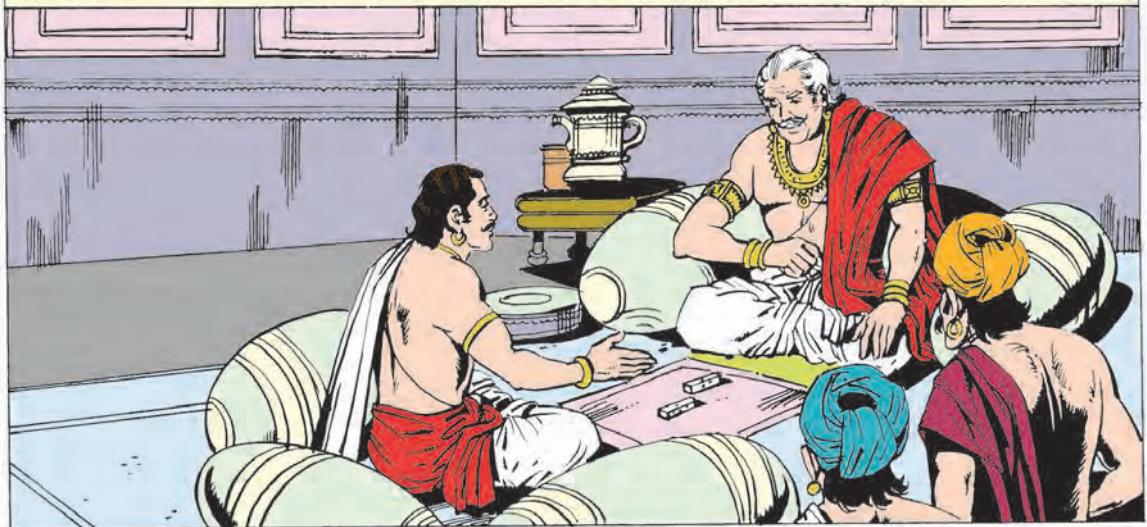
MY LORD, I AM CALLED BRIHANNALA. I AM PROFICIENT IN THE ARTS OF SINGING, DANCING AND PLAYING MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS.

"THE KING SAID—

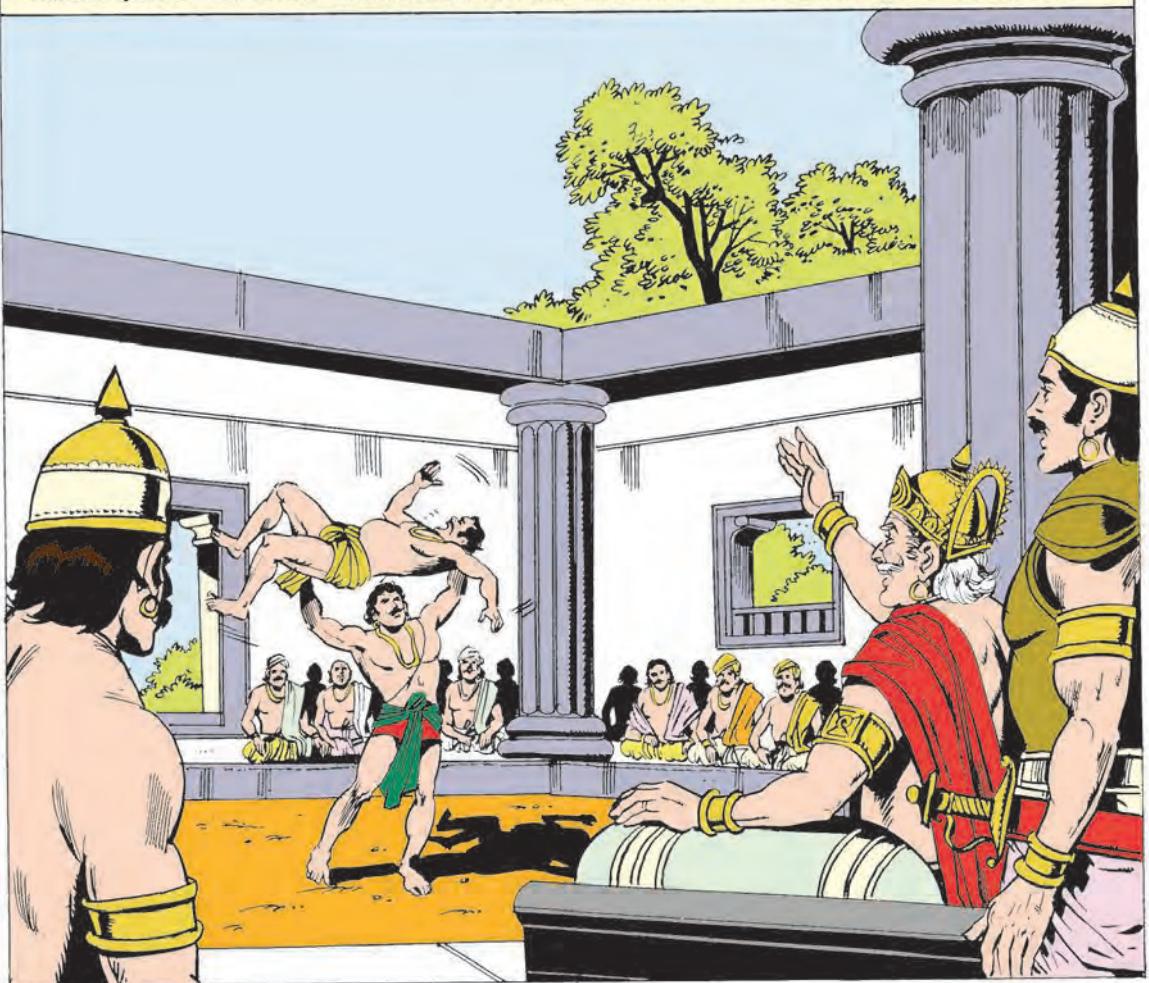
BRIHANNALA,
I GRANT YOU
PERMISSION TO TEACH
MY DAUGHTER AND
HER MATES TO
DANCE.

I COULD
TRAIN
PRINCESS
UTTARA IN THE
ART OF
DANCING.

"LIVING IN DISGUISE, THE PANDAVAS PERFORMED THE DUTIES ASSIGNED TO THEM. THUS YUDHISHTHIRA ENTERTAINED THE KING AND HIS COURTIERS WITH THE GAME OF DICE.



"BHEEMA, WHEN HE WASN'T COOKING, PROVIDED EXCITEMENT TO SPECTATORS IN THE ARENA.

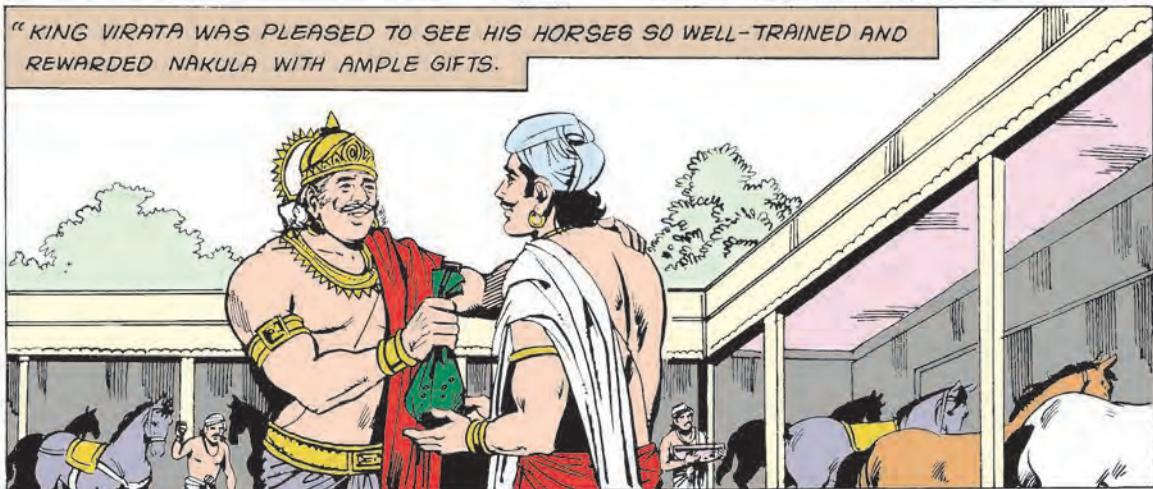


THE PANDAVAS AT VIRATA'S PALACE

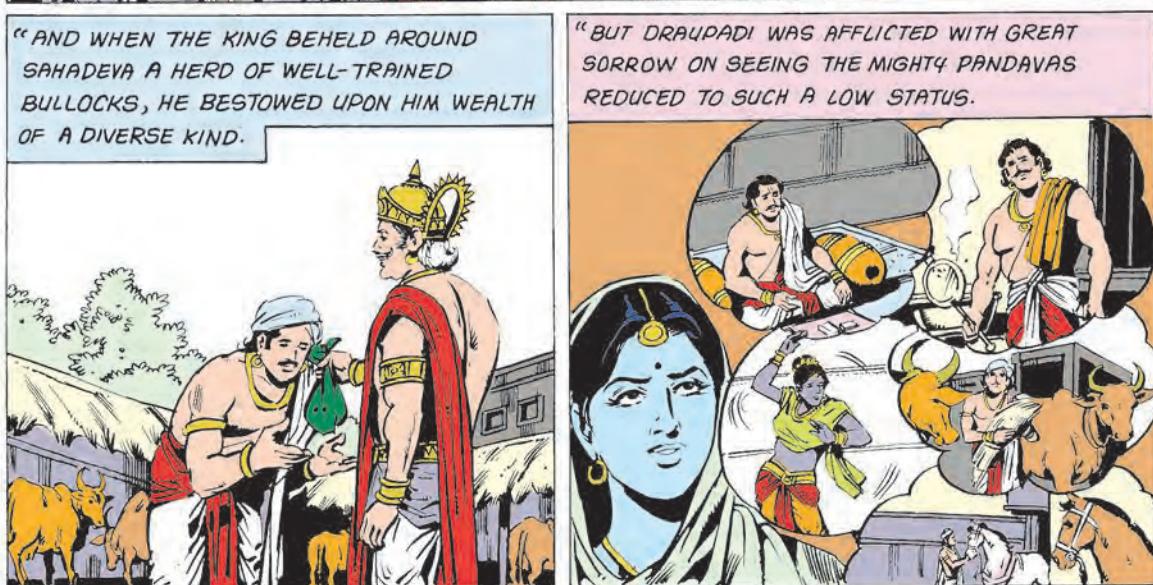
"ARJUNA TRAINED THE YOUNG MAIDENS TO ENTERTAIN THE KING WITH THEIR SINGING AND DANCING.



"KING VIRATA WAS PLEASED TO SEE HIS HORSES SO WELL-TRAINED AND REWARDED NAKULA WITH AMPLE GIFTS.



"AND WHEN THE KING BEHELD AROUND SAHADEVA A HERD OF WELL-TRAINED BULLOCKS, HE BESTOWED UPON HIM WEALTH OF A DIVERSE KIND.



"BUT DRAUPADI WAS AFFLICTED WITH GREAT SORROW ON SEEING THE MIGHTY PANDAVAS REDUCED TO SUCH A LOW STATUS.



"THUS THE PANDAVAS PASSED TEN MONTHS IN DISGUISE IN THE KINGDOM OF MATSYA. IT WAS ONE DAY THEREAFTER THAT KEECHAKA, THE COMMANDER OF VIRATA'S FORCES, CHANCED TO BEHOLD DRAUPADI.



"HE APPROACHED HIS SISTER QUEEN SUDESHNA.

WHO IS THE BEAUTIFUL MAIDEN I SAW IN YOUR CHAMBER?

SHE IS A SAIRANDHRI. SHE LOOKS AFTER MY NEEDS.

"SMITTEN BY HER BEAUTY, KEECHAKA ONE DAY APPROACHED DRAUPADI.

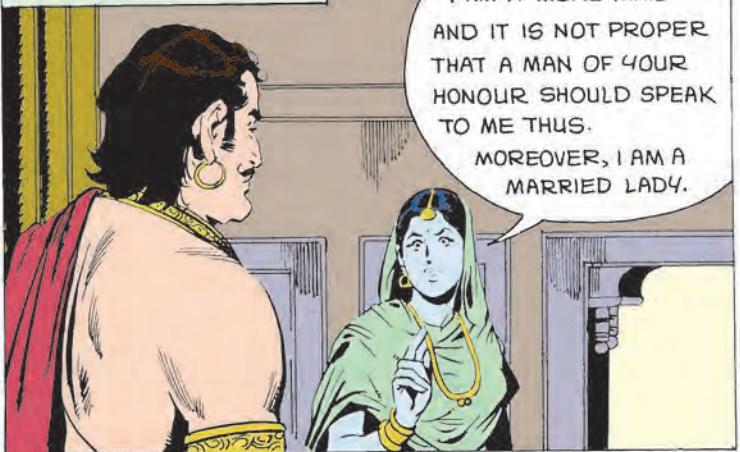
TELL ME, O FAIR MAIDEN, WHO ARE YOU? WHERE HAVE YOU COME FROM?

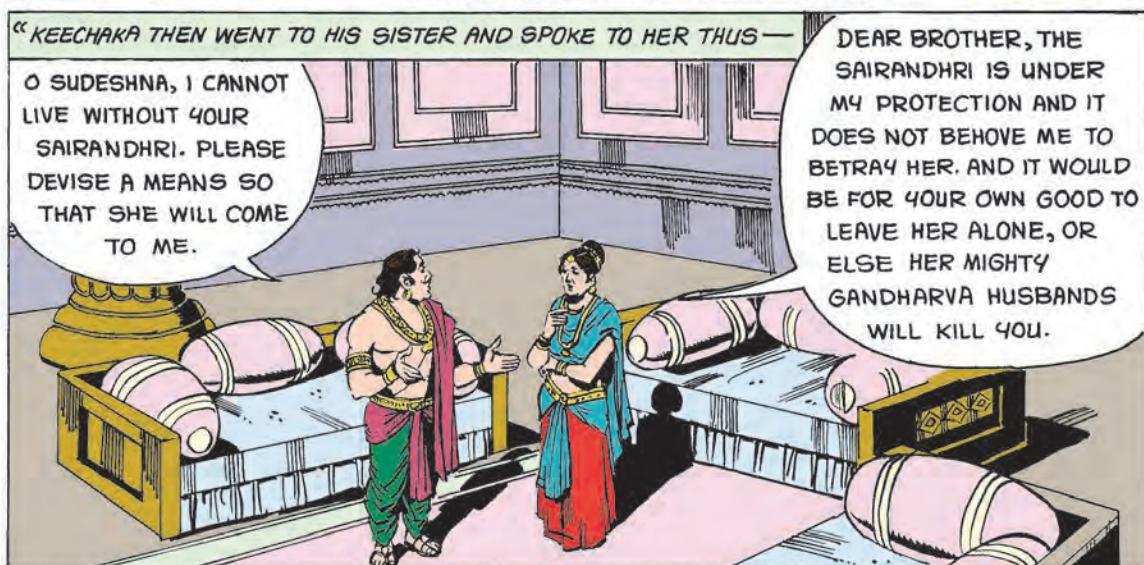
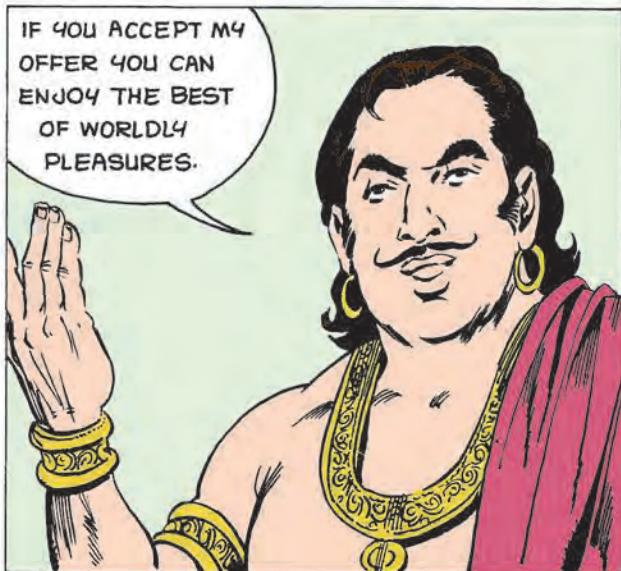
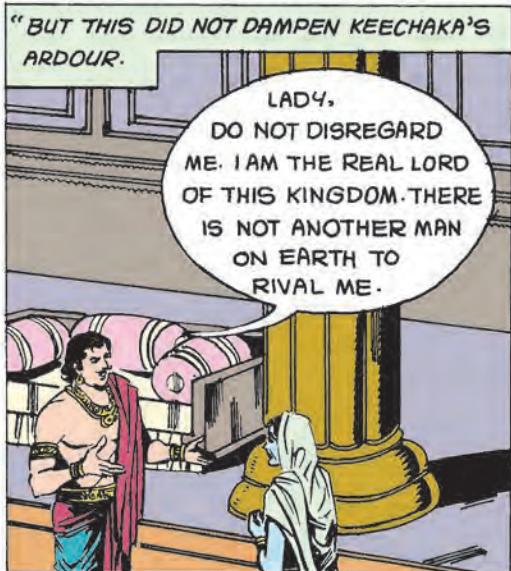
LET ME BE YOUR SLAVE. I WILL FORSAKE ALL MY WIVES AND BE ATTACHED TO YOU ALONE. ALLOW ME TO BE OF SERVICE TO YOU.

"DRAUPADI REPLIED —

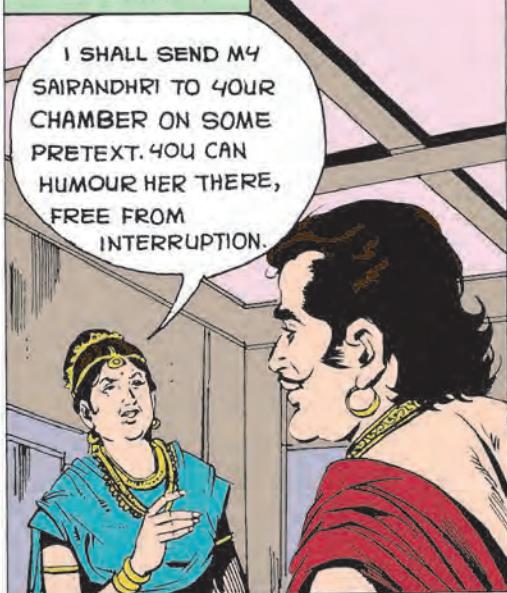
I AM A MERE MAID AND IT IS NOT PROPER THAT A MAN OF YOUR HONOUR SHOULD SPEAK TO ME THUS.

MOREOVER, I AM A MARRIED LADY.

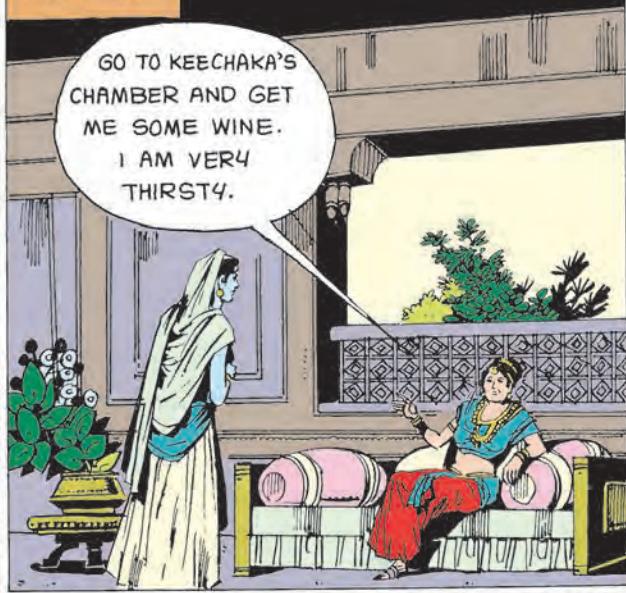




"AFTER A LOT OF PERSUASION, SUDESHNA FINALLY GAVE IN.



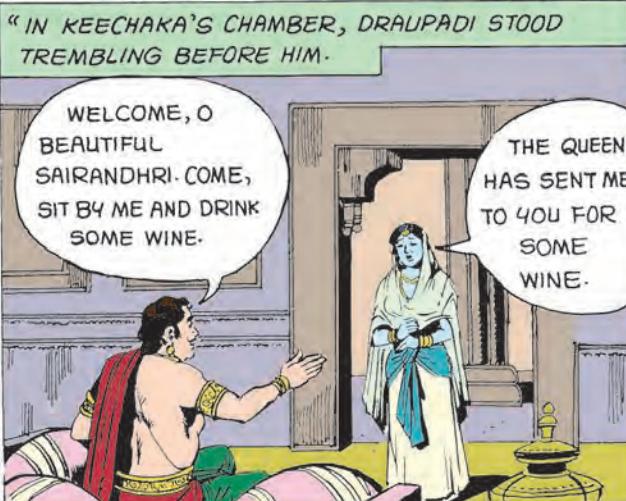
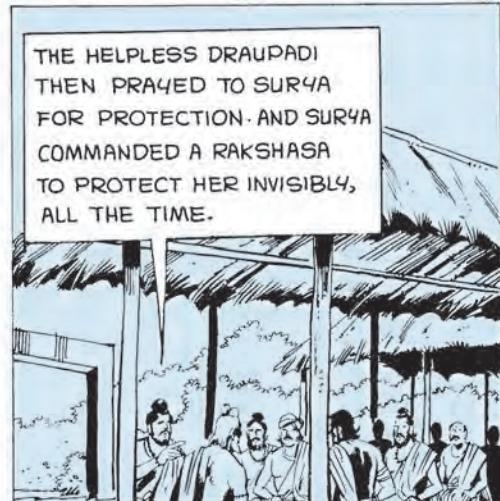
"WHEN KEECHAKA LEFT, SUDESHNA CALLED DRAUPADI.



"DRAUPADI WAS FRIGHTENED—

O QUEEN, DO NOT SEND ME ON ANY ERRAND TO KEECHAKA. HE IS SURE TO MOLEST ME. YOU HAVE MANY OTHER MAIDS. SEND ONE OF THEM.

DO NOT FEAR. SENT BY ME, HE WILL NOT DARE TO HARM YOU.



THE PANDAVAS AT VIRATA'S PALACE

"TAKING HOLD OF DRAUPADI'S HAND, KEECHAKA SAID—

THE QUEEN'S ORDERS WILL BE CARRIED OUT BY SOME OTHER PERSON. YOU STAY WITH ME.

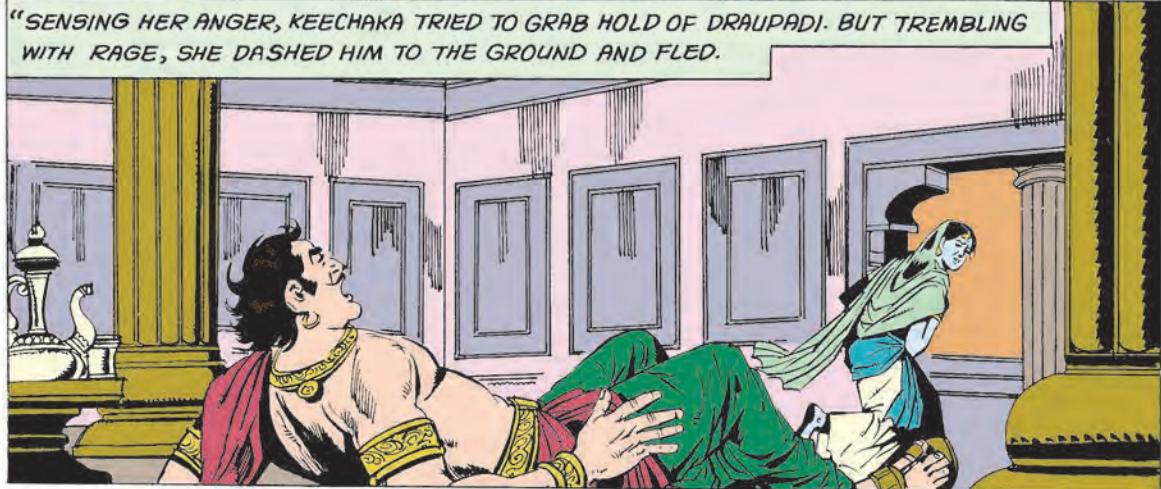


"FREEING HERSELF FROM HIM, DRAUPADI EXCLAIMED—

O SINNER! NEVER EVEN IN MY MIND HAVE I BEEN DISLOYAL TO MY HUSBANDS. YOU WILL REMAIN BOUND BY THE TRUTH OF MY FAITHFULNESS. AND LISTEN, YOU WILL RUE THIS ACT OF YOURS AND WILL BE DRAGGED ON THE GROUND BY YOUR ENEMY.



"SENSING HER ANGER, KEECHAKA TRIED TO GRAB HOLD OF DRAUPADI. BUT TREMBLING WITH RAGE, SHE DASHED HIM TO THE GROUND AND FLED.



"DRAUPADI CAME RUSHING TO THE COURT OF VIRATA WHERE THE KING WAS PLAYING A GAME OF DICE WITH YUDHISHTHIRA. KEECHAKA CAME RUNNING AFTER HER AND KICKED HER IN THE PRESENCE OF ALL.



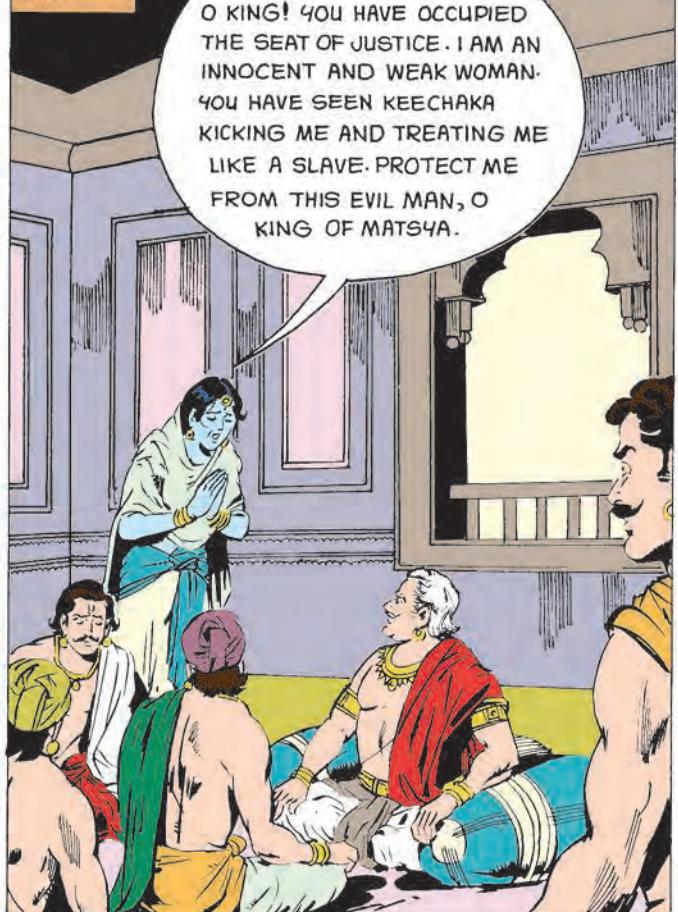
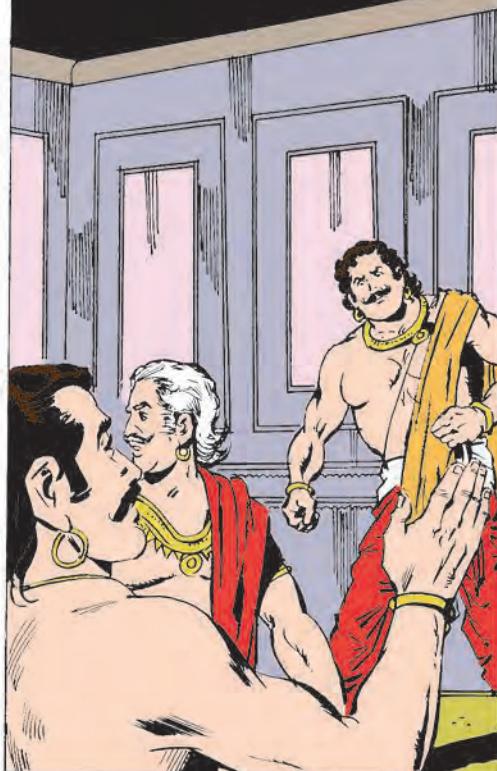
"THEREUPON, THE INVISIBLE RAKSHA APPPOINTED BY SURYA TO PROTECT DRAUPADI, GAVE KEECHAKA A MIGHTY BLOW. KEECHAKA FELL DOWN UNCONSCIOUS.



"BHEEMA WHO WAS PRESENT GNASHED HIS TEETH AND WAS READY TO FLY AT THE THROAT OF KEECHAKA. BUT YUDHISHTHIRA, FEARING DISCOVERY, SIGNALLED TO BHEEMA TO CONTROL HIS ANGER.

"BUT DRAUPADI, STILL TREMBLING UNDER THE AFFRONT TO HER WOMANHOOD, TURNED TO KING VIRATA AND SAID—

O KING! YOU HAVE OCCUPIED THE SEAT OF JUSTICE. I AM AN INNOCENT AND WEAK WOMAN. YOU HAVE SEEN KEECHAKA KICKING ME AND TREATING ME LIKE A SLAVE. PROTECT ME FROM THIS EVIL MAN, O KING OF MATSYA.



"HEARING HER, KING VIRATA SAID—

I DO NOT KNOW THE CAUSE OF THE DISPUTE. AND NOT KNOWING THE TRUE CAUSE, HOW CAN I DISPENSE JUSTICE?

SHE IS A NOBLE LADY AND DOES NOT DESERVE TO BE KICKED.

"AS ALL THE COURTiers PRAISED DRAUPADI, YUDHISHTHIRA, ENRAGED WITH KEECHAKA, ADDRESSED HER—

O SAIRANDHRI, RETURN TO THE QUEEN'S APARTMENT. YOU ARE INTERRUPTING THE GAME OF DICE. THE GANDHARVAS WILL LOOK AFTER YOU.

MAY ALL MY TORMENTORS BE KILLED BY THE KIND GANDHARVAS WHOSE ELDER BROTHER IS ETERNALLY GAMBLING.

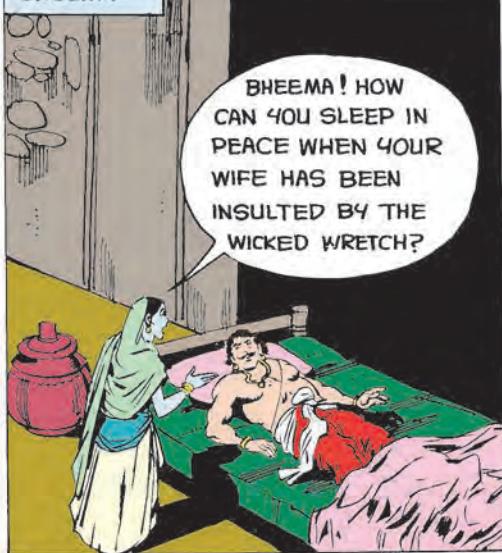
"COVERED WITH DUST AND WITH HER HAIR LOOSE, DRAUPADI WALKED AWAY TO SUDESHNA'S APARTMENT.

"THEN—

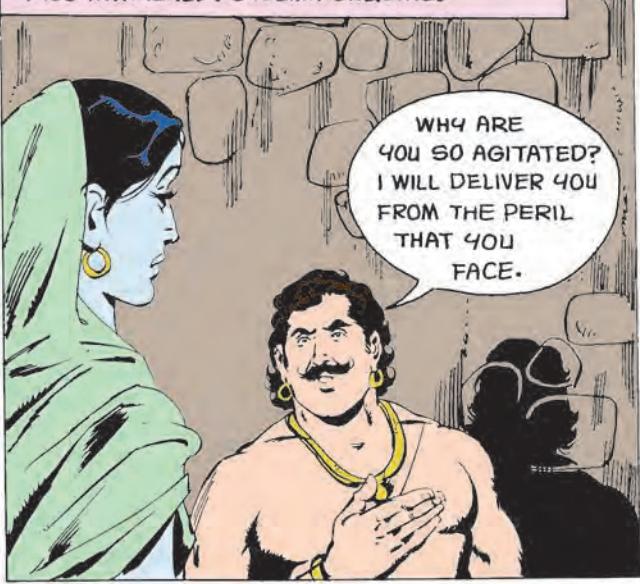
WHAT AM I TO DO?
WHERE SHOULD I GO?

AH! I SHALL APPROACH BHEEMA. HE IS THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN DO WHAT I DESIRE.

"THAT NIGHT DRAUPADI WENT TO BHEEMA.



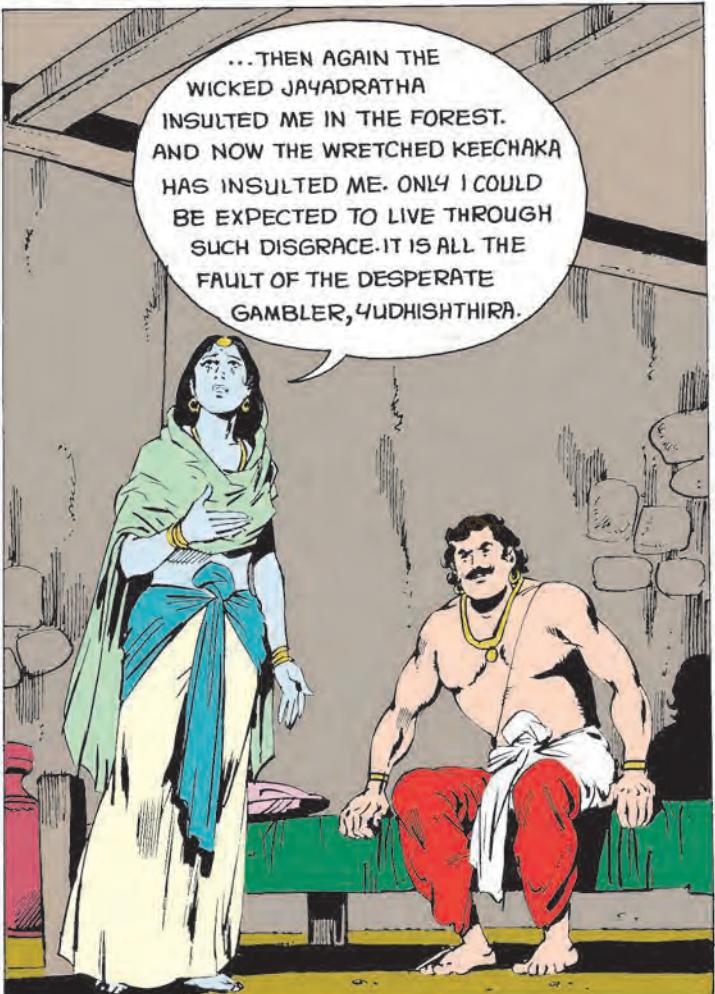
"THUS AWAKENED, BHEEMA ENQUIRED —

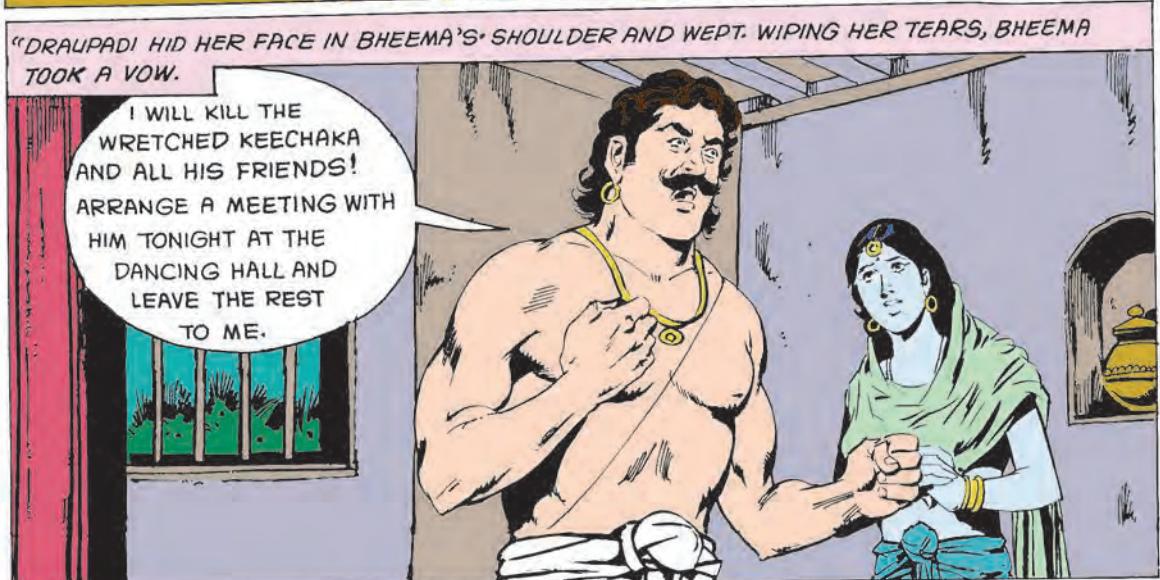
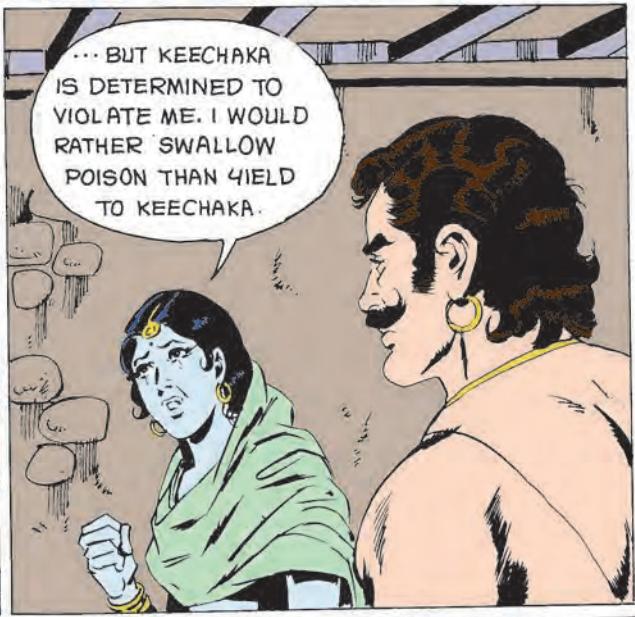
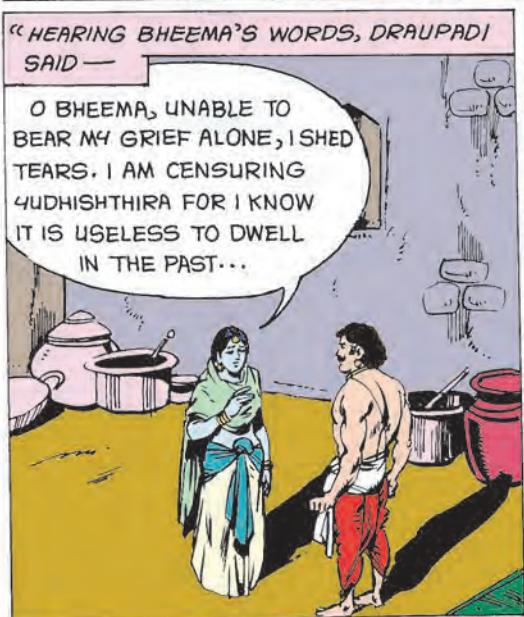


WITH YUDHISHTHIRA FOR A HUSBAND, I WILL NEVER BE FREE FROM GRIEF. THE INSULT HEAPED ON ME AT THE COURT OF THE KURUS AFTER THE GAME OF DICE STILL RANKLES IN ME. WHO ELSE BUT DRAUPADI WOULD LIVE TO SUFFER SUCH MISERY...

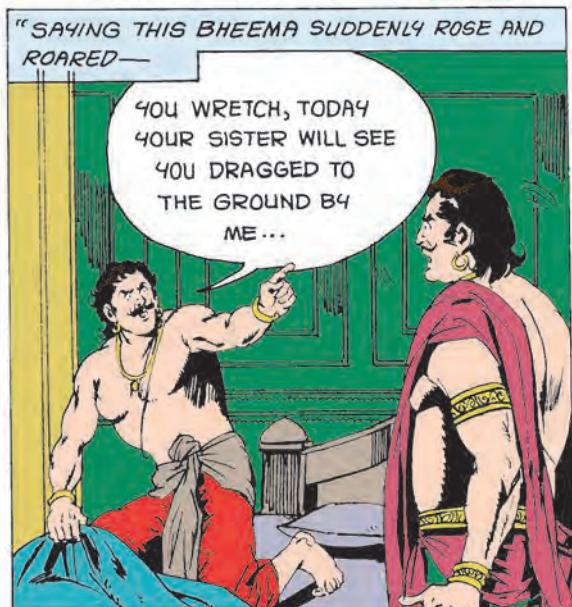
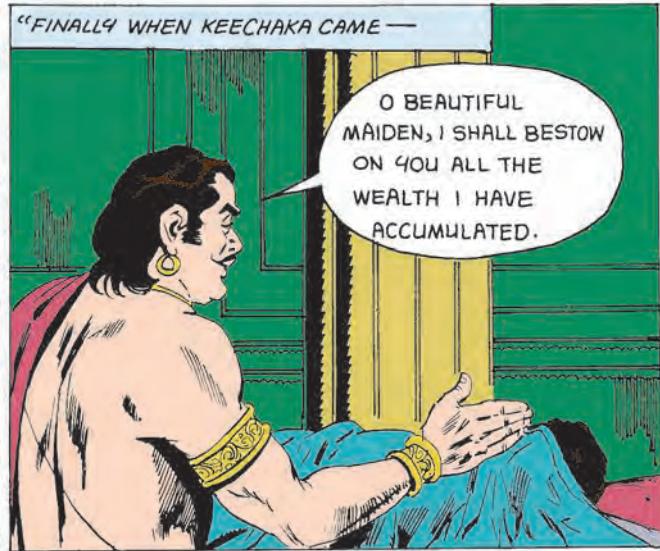


...THEN AGAIN THE WICKED JAYADRATHA INSULTED ME IN THE FOREST. AND NOW THE WRETCHED KEECHAKA HAS INSULTED ME. ONLY I COULD BE EXPECTED TO LIVE THROUGH SUCH DISGRACE. IT IS ALL THE FAULT OF THE DESPERATE GAMBLER, YUDHISHTHIRA.

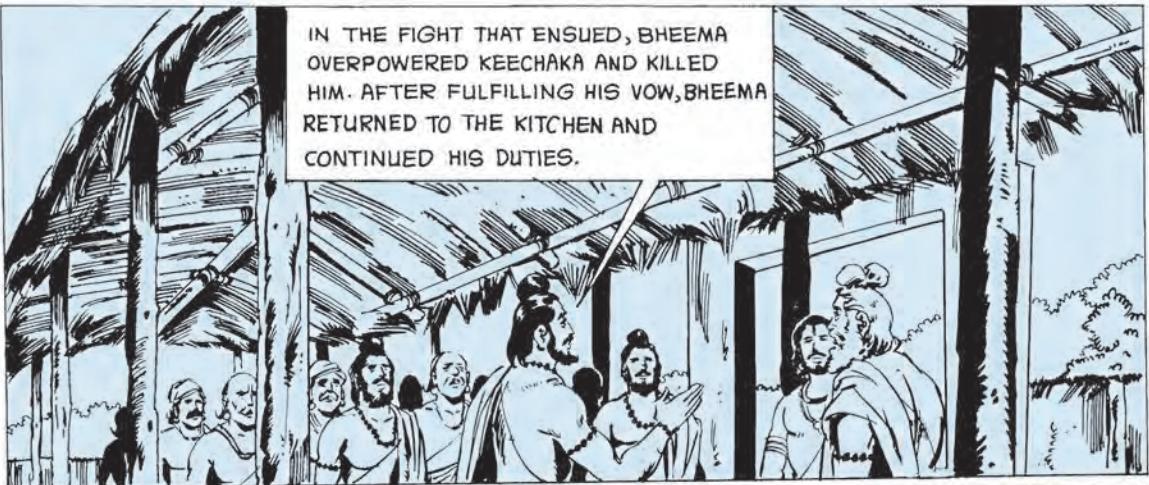




* A CASTE ENGAGED IN THE PROFESSION OF CHARIOTERING.



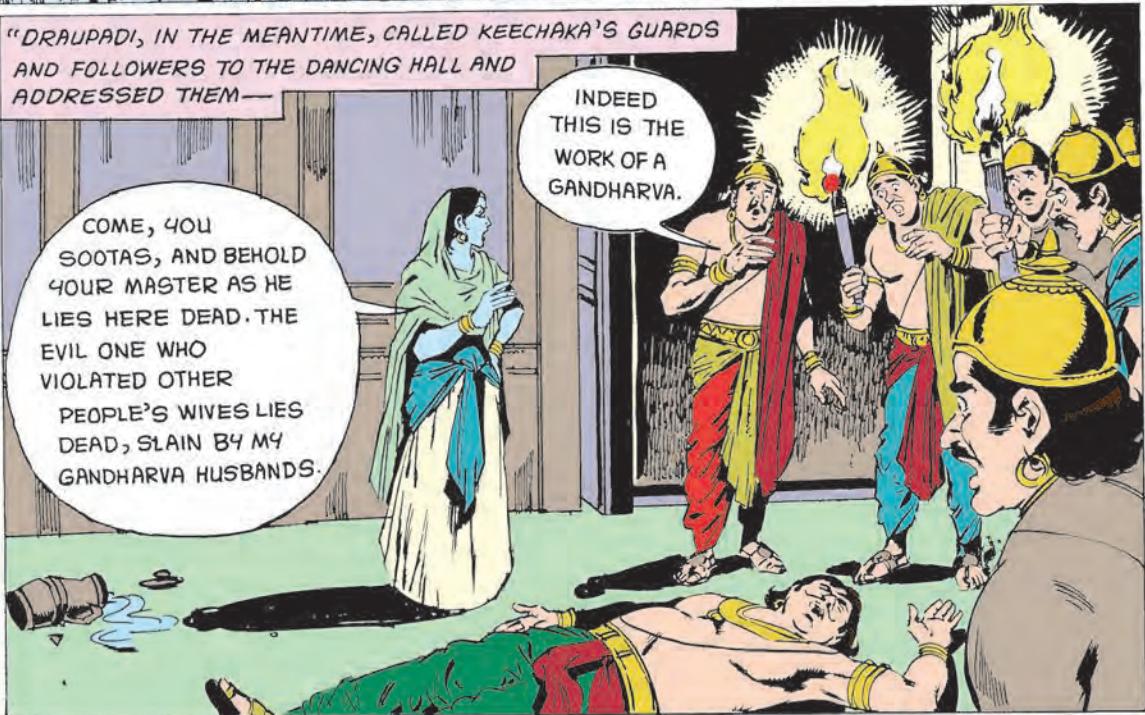
IN THE FIGHT THAT ENSUED, BHEEMA OVERPOWERED KEECHAKA AND KILLED HIM. AFTER FULFILLING HIS VOW, BHEEMA RETURNED TO THE KITCHEN AND CONTINUED HIS DUTIES.



"DRAUPADI, IN THE MEANTIME, CALLED KEECHAKA'S GUARDS AND FOLLOWERS TO THE DANCING HALL AND ADDRESSED THEM—

COME, YOU SOOTAS, AND BEHOLD YOUR MASTER AS HE LIES HERE DEAD. THE EVIL ONE WHO VIOLATED OTHER PEOPLE'S WIVES LIES DEAD, SLAIN BY MY GANDHARVA HUSBANDS.

INDEED THIS IS THE WORK OF A GANDHARVA.

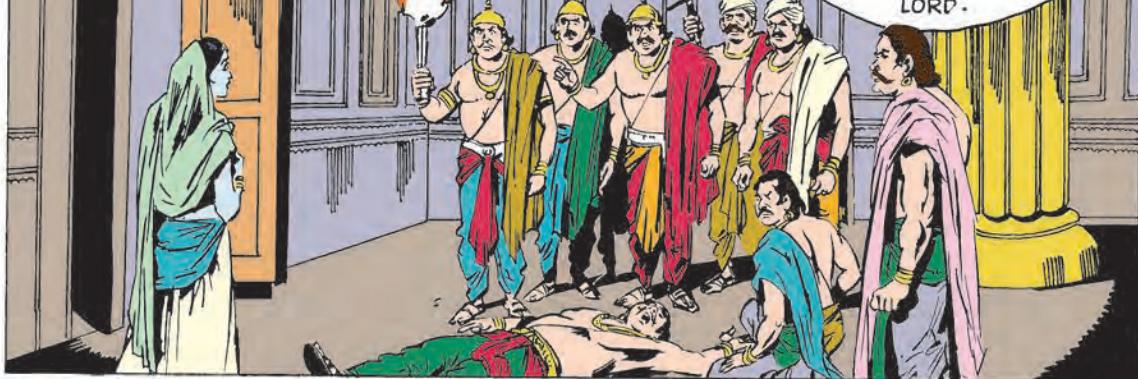


"THEN KEECHAKA'S FOLLOWERS BEGAN TO WAIL LOUDLY.



"SUDDENLY ONE OF THE FOLLOWERS OF KEECHAKA SAID —

IT IS THE FAULT OF THIS UNCHASTE WOMAN THAT KEECHAKA HAS LOST HIS LIFE. LET US CREMATE HER ALONG WITH OUR LORD.



KING VIRATA WAS TOLD OF THE PLANS. HE AGREED, KNOWING THE POWER OF THE SOOTAS. SO A PROCESSION WAS TAKEN OUT TOWARDS THE CREMATION GROUND.



"WHEN BHEEMA HEARD ABOUT THIS, HIS BODY SWELLED WITH RAGE ...



"... AFTER CHANGING HIS ATTIRE, HE SECRETLY LET HIMSELF OUT OF THE PALACE AND PROCEEDED TOWARDS THE CREMATION GROUND.

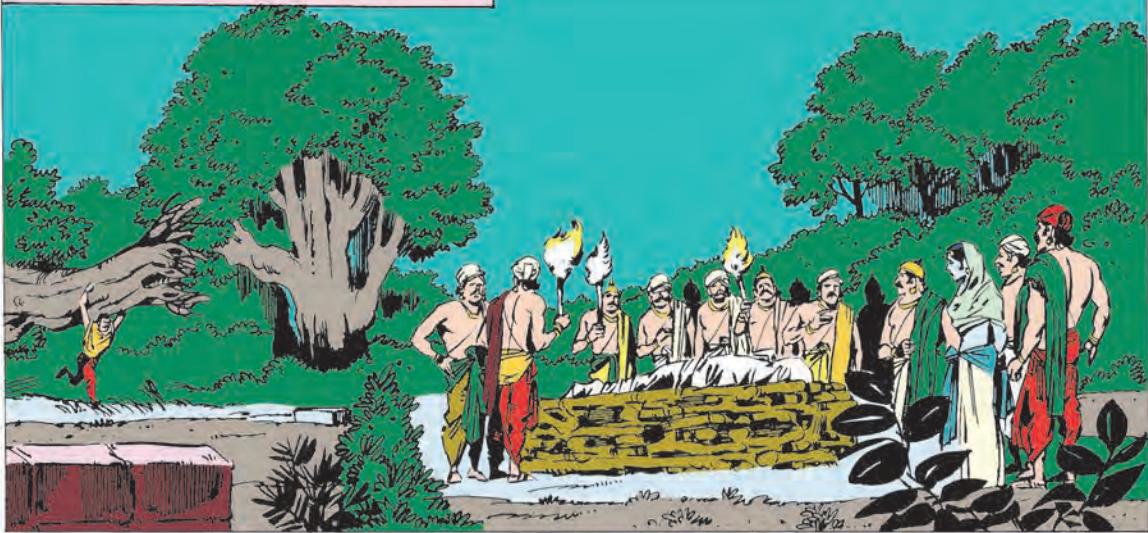


"ON THE WAY HE UPROOTED A MIGHTY TREE AND PLACED IT ON HIS SHOULDER.



THE PANDAVAS AT VIRATA'S PALACE

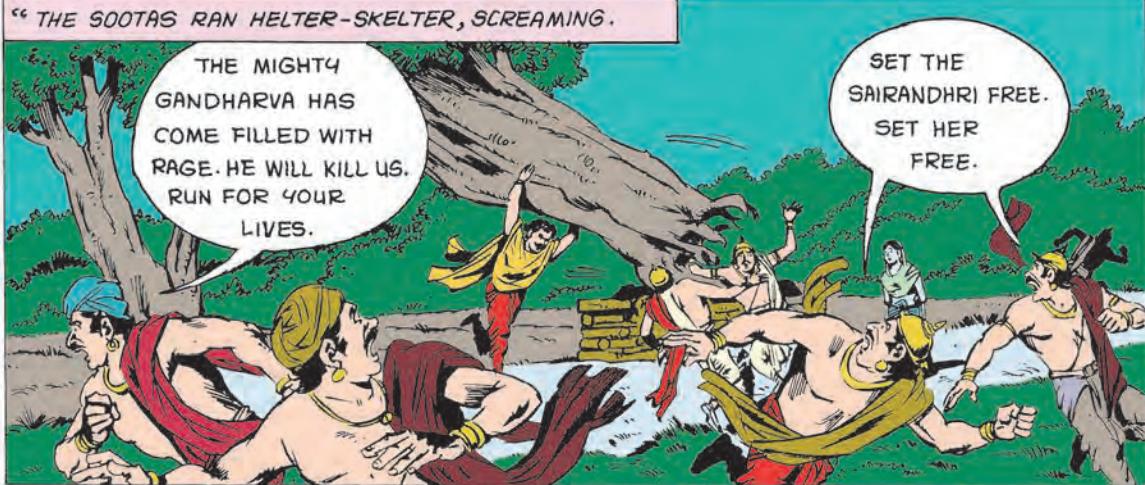
"AT THE CREMATION GROUND BHEEMA RUSHED TOWARDS THE SOOTAS WITH THE TREE TRUNK IN HIS HANDS.



"THE SOOTAS RAN HELTER-SKELTER, SCREAMING.

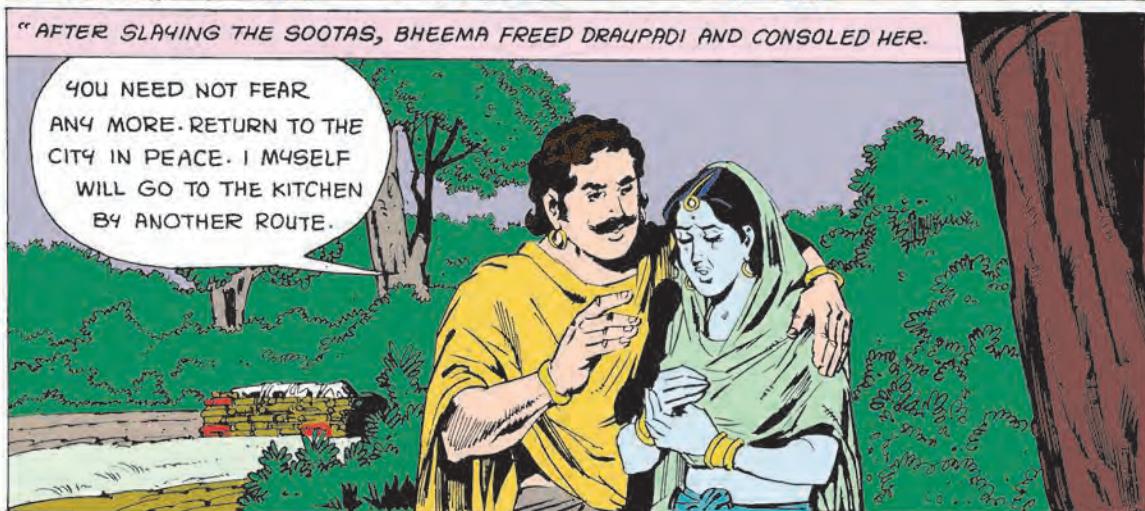
THE MIGHTY GANDHARVA HAS COME FILLED WITH RAGE. HE WILL KILL US. RUN FOR YOUR LIVES.

SET THE SAIRANDHRI FREE. SET HER FREE.



"AFTER SLAYING THE SOOTAS, BHEEMA FREED DRAUPADI AND CONSOLED HER.

YOU NEED NOT FEAR ANY MORE. RETURN TO THE CITY IN PEACE. I MYSELF WILL GO TO THE KITCHEN BY ANOTHER ROUTE.



"SAIRANDHRI RETURNED TO THE CITY. ON HEARING OF HER ARRIVAL, THE MAIDENS FROM THE DANCING HALL, ALONG WITH ARJUNA, CAME TO MEET HER.

IT IS GOOD THAT YOUR TORMENTOR HAS BEEN KILLED AND YOU ARE SAFELY BACK WITH US.



"KING VIRATA AND SUDESHNA GOT TO KNOW OF SAIRANDHRI'S ROLE IN THE KILLING OF KEECHAKA.

SAIRANDHRI! WE ARE AFRAID OF THE WRATH OF YOUR GANDHARVA HUSBANDS ON OUR KINGDOM. YOU MAY NOW LEAVE US AND GO WHERE YOU PLEASE.

PLEASE WAIT FOR THIRTEEN MORE DAYS. BY THEN THE GANDHARVAS WILL NOT ONLY HAVE ACCOMPLISHED THEIR TASK, BUT WILL ALSO REPAY YOU FOR YOUR KINDNESS.

STAY IF YOU WILL. BUT PROTECT MY HUSBAND AND SONS, I BESEECH YOU.



THUS ENDS THE TWENTY-FIFTH SESSION OF OUR RENDERING OF VAISHAMPAYANA'S RECITAL OF VYASA'S IMMORTAL ITIHASA, THE MAHABHARATA.

Mahabharata - 26

PANIC IN THE KAURAVA CAMP

O MONARCH, KING DURYODHANA SENT SPIES IN ALL DIRECTIONS TO SPOT THE EXILED PANDAVAS AND BRING NEWS OF THEM.

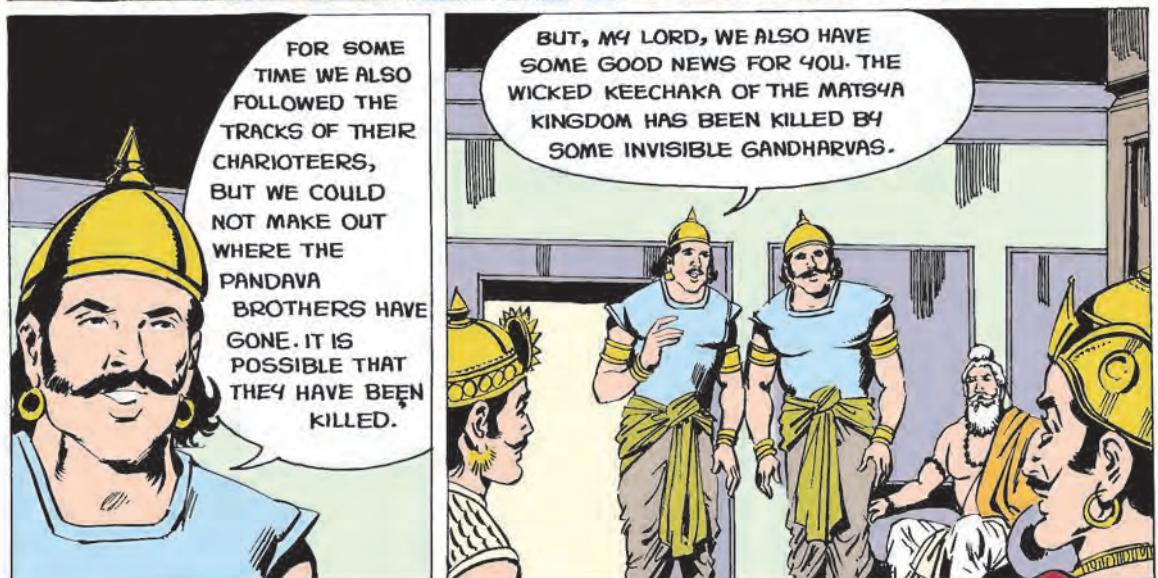


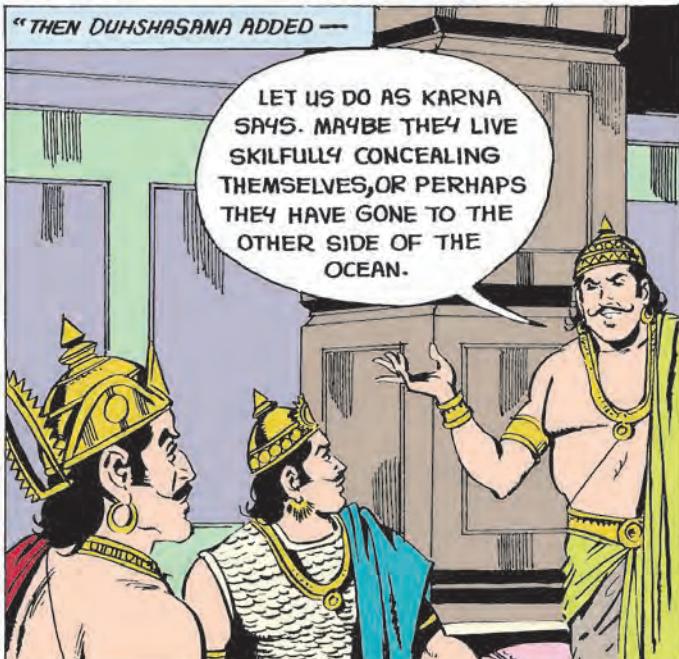
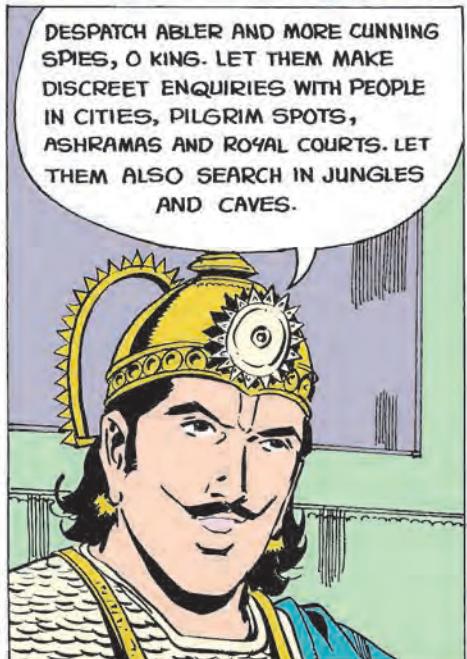
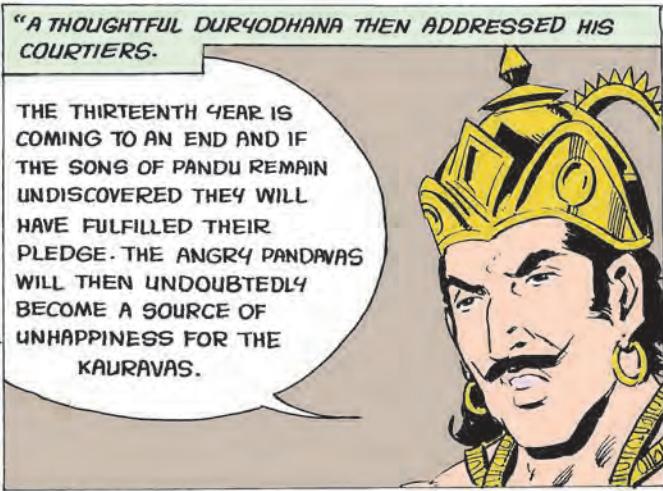
"AFTER SEARCHING FAR AND WIDE, THE SPIES CAME BACK TO HASTINAPURA AND REPORTED TO DURYODHANA —



FOR SOME
TIME WE ALSO
FOLLOWED THE
TRACKS OF THEIR
CHARIOOTEERS,
BUT WE COULD
NOT MAKE OUT
WHERE THE
PANDAVA
BROTHERS HAVE
GONE. IT IS
POSSIBLE THAT
THEY HAVE BEEN
KILLED.

BUT, MY LORD, WE ALSO HAVE
SOME GOOD NEWS FOR YOU. THE
WICKED KEECHAKA OF THE MATSYA
KINGDOM HAS BEEN KILLED BY
SOME INVISIBLE GANDHARVAS.





THEY MAY HAVE PERISHED, OR THEY HAVE POSSIBLY BEEN DEVOURED BY SOME WILD BEASTS. O KING, DISPEL ALL ANXIETY FROM YOUR HEART AND CONDUCT YOURSELF AS USUAL.

PERSONS LIKE THE PANDAVAS CAN NEITHER PERISH NOR MEET WITH FAILURE AS THEY HONOUR AND OBEY YUDHISHTHIRA. I SUGGEST A SEARCH SHOULD BE INSTITUTED FOR THEM BY MEN WHO CAN RECOGNISE THEM.

"BHEESHMA ADDED—

I AGREE WITH DRONA. THE MIGHTY PANDAVAS WILL NEVER PERISH AS THEY ARE NOT TO BE WON IN BATTLE AND AS THEY FOLLOW THE DHARMA...

...LOOK FOR THE PANDAVAS IN PLACES WHERE PEOPLE ARE VIRTUOUS, KIND-HEARTED AND KNOWN FOR THEIR HUMILITY, FOR THESE ARE THE QUALITIES YUDHISHTHIRA INSPIRES AMONG PEOPLE.

"THEN KRIPA* SAID—

ONE WHO NURSES THE AMBITION OF EMPERORSHIP SHOULD NOT IGNORE EVEN ORDINARY FOES, LET ALONE THE PANDAVAS WHO ARE SKILLED IN THE USE OF EVERY WEAPON OF WAR. THEY WILL UNDOUBTEDLY MAKE THEIR APPEARANCES IN TIME. MEANWHILE, YOU SHOULD MAKE A CORRECT ASSESSMENT OF OUR MILITARY STRENGTH AS WELL AS THAT OF OUR ALLIES.

"BUT DURYODHANA WAS TROUBLED IN MIND.

KEECHAKA AND HIS BROTHERS HAVE BEEN SLAIN. I BELIEVE THIS IS THE WORK OF NONE OTHER THAN BHEEMA, AND SAIRANDHRI, I BELIEVE, IS DRAUPADI. WE SHOULD NOW LEAD AN EXPEDITION TO MATSYA AND LOOK FOR THE PANDAVAS THERE.

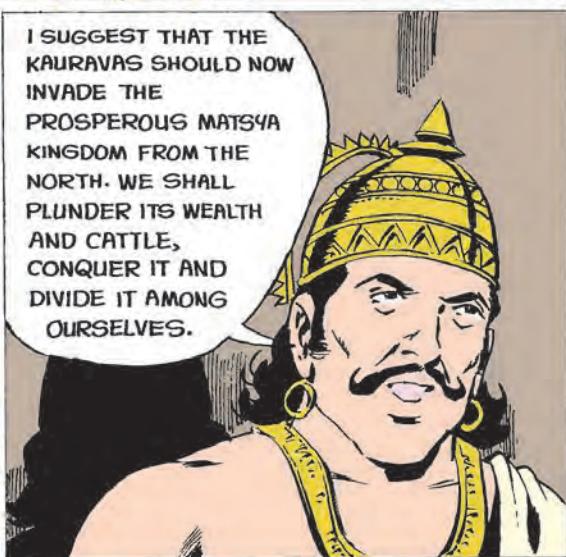


"KING SUSHARMA OF TRIGARTA PROPOSED —

THE MATSYA ARMY, LED BY KEECHAKA, HAS GIVEN ME TREMENDOUS TROUBLE IN THE PAST. HE HAS BEEN KILLED BY GANDHARVAS NOW.

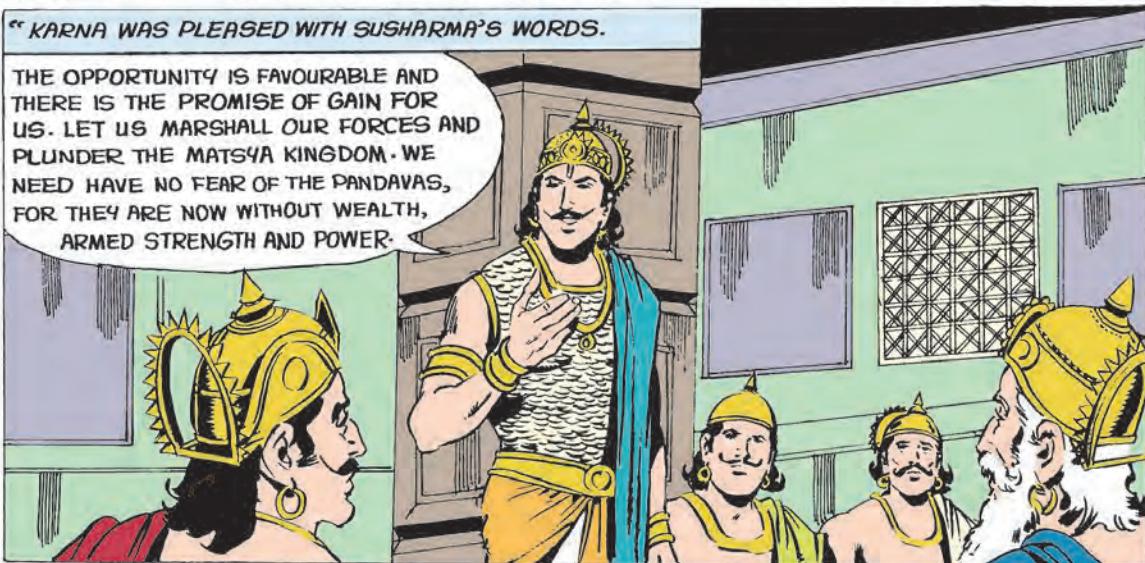


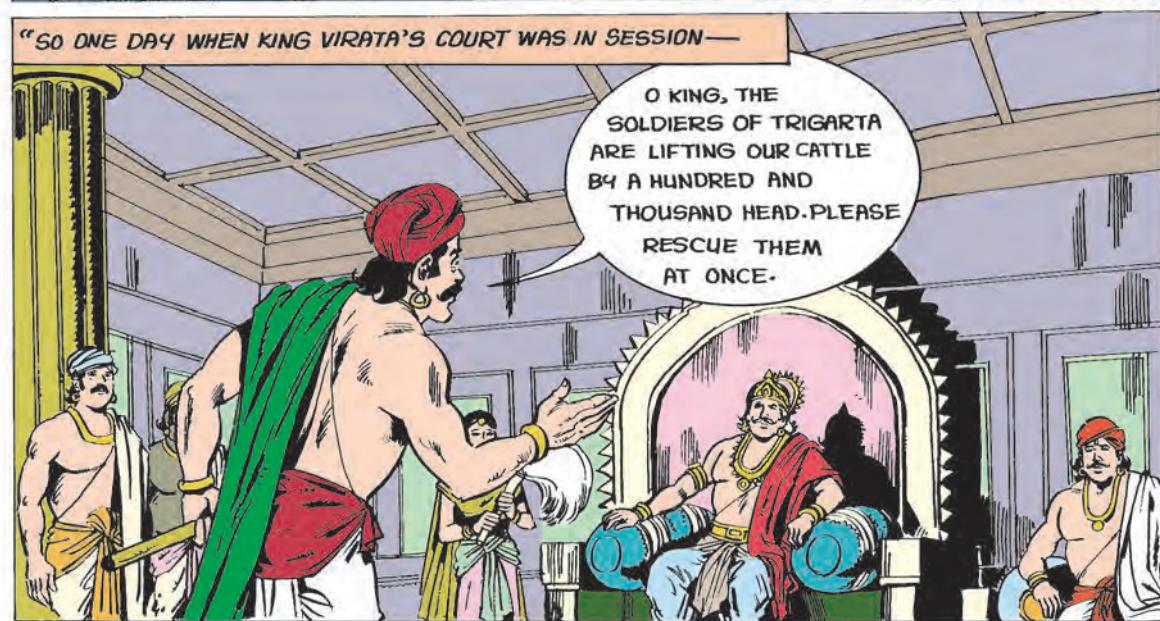
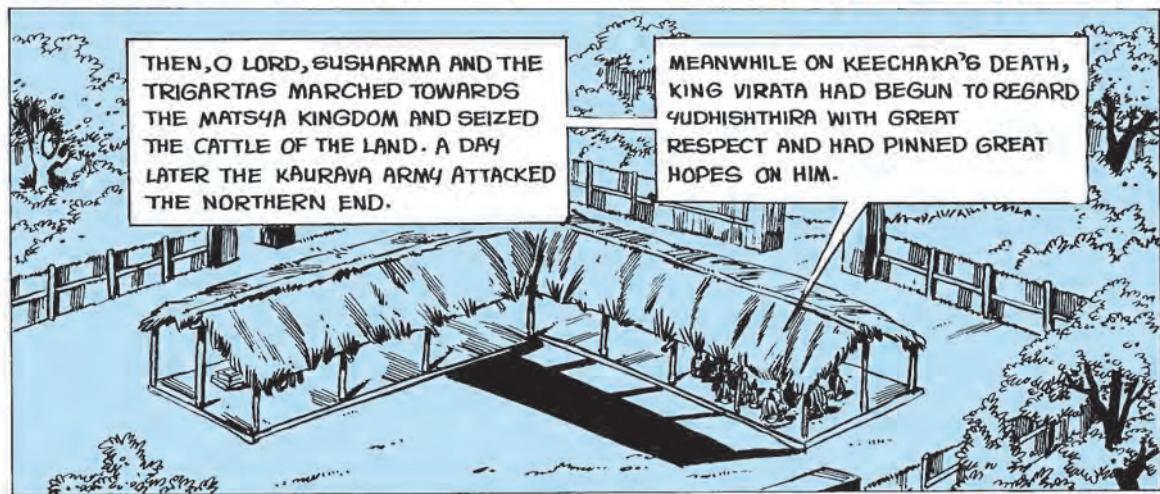
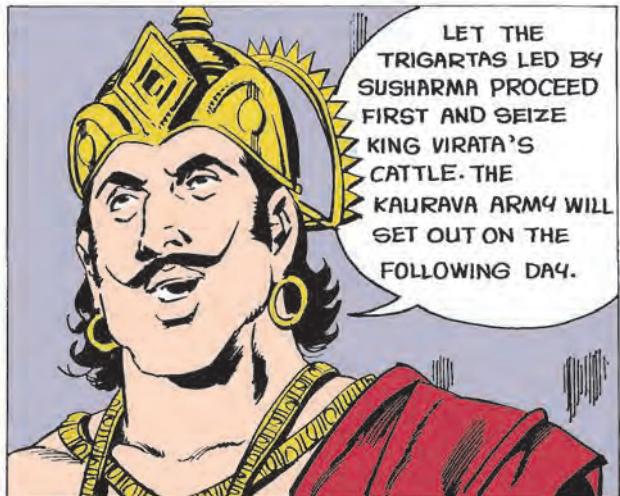
I SUGGEST THAT THE KAURAVAS SHOULD NOW INVADE THE PROSPEROUS MATSYA KINGDOM FROM THE NORTH. WE SHALL PLUNDER ITS WEALTH AND CATTLE, CONQUER IT AND DIVIDE IT AMONG OURSELVES.



"KARNA WAS PLEASED WITH SUSHARMA'S WORDS.

THE OPPORTUNITY IS FAVOURABLE AND THERE IS THE PROMISE OF GAIN FOR US. LET US MARSHALL OUR FORCES AND PLUNDER THE MATSYA KINGDOM. WE NEED HAVE NO FEAR OF THE PANDAVAS, FOR THEY ARE NOW WITHOUT WEALTH, ARMED STRENGTH AND POWER.





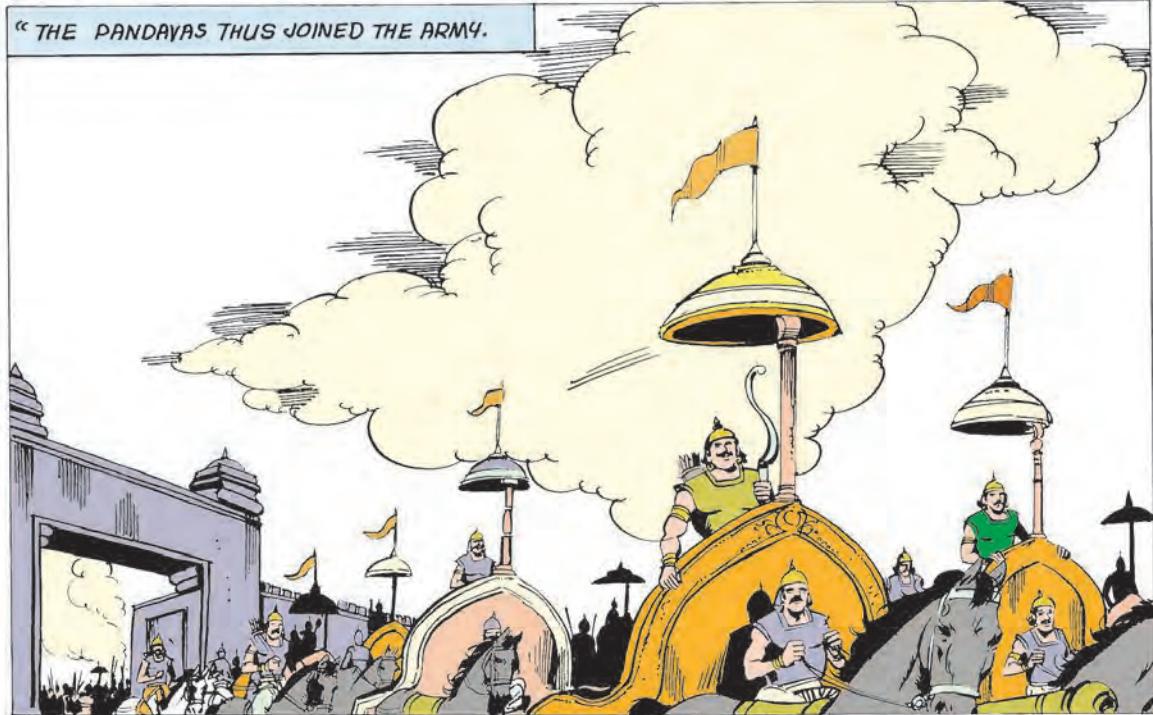
"KING VIRATA HASTILY GATHERED TOGETHER HIS BRAVE SOLDIERS AND PRINCES. AND, AS THE CHARIOTS WERE BEING YOKED, VIRATA SAID TO HIS BROTHER SHATANEeka—

SHATANEeka, I AM CONVINCED THAT KANKA, BALLAVA, TANTIPALA AND GRANTHIKA CAN ALSO JOIN IN THE BATTLE. GIVE THEM CHARIOTS FURNISHED WITH BANNERS, COATS OF MAIL AND WEAPONS.

I WILL.

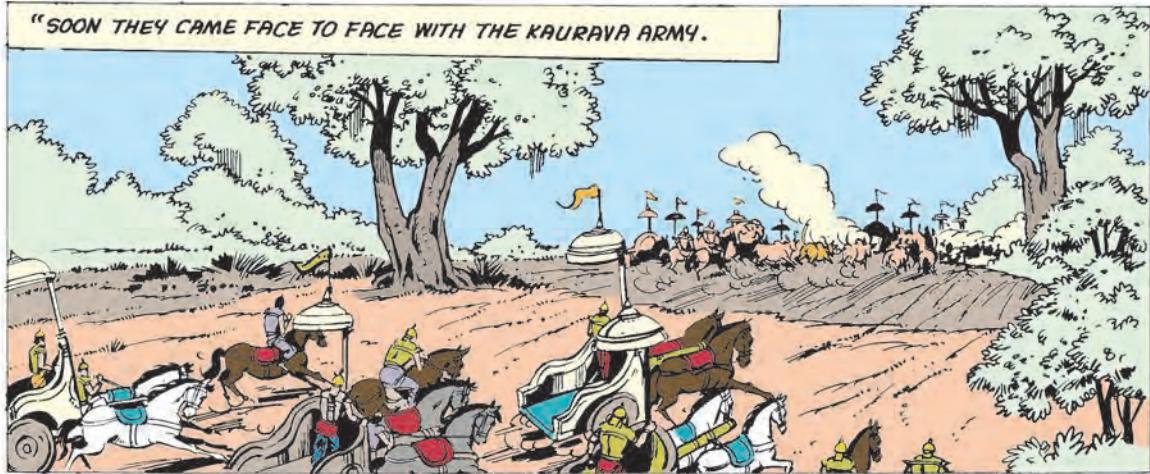


"THE PANDAVAS THUS JOINED THE ARMY.

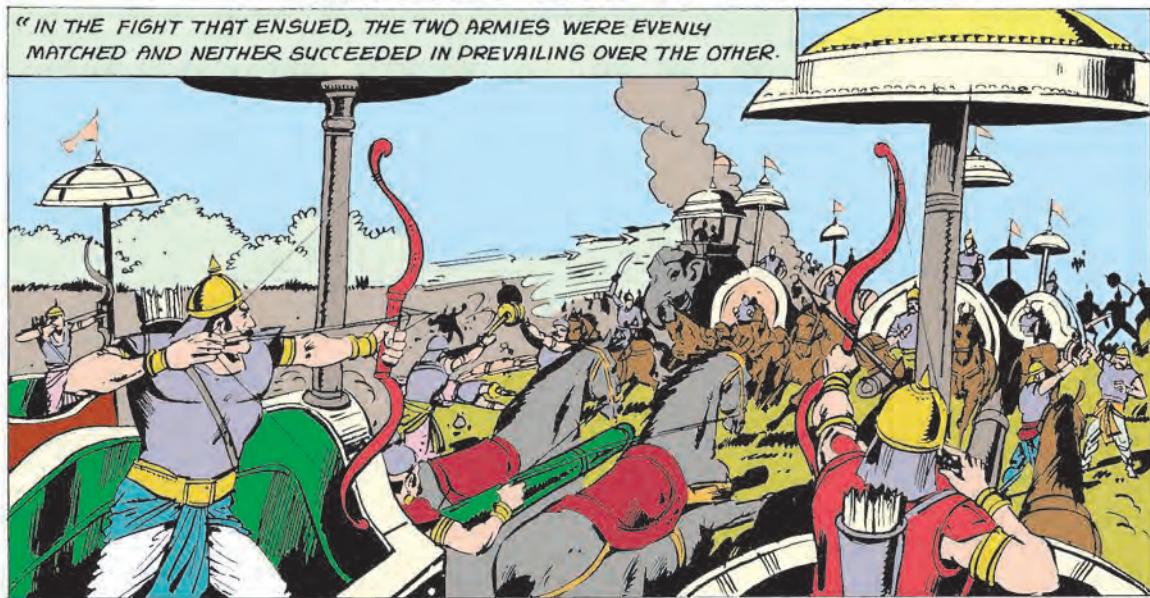


PANIC IN THE KAURAVA CAMP

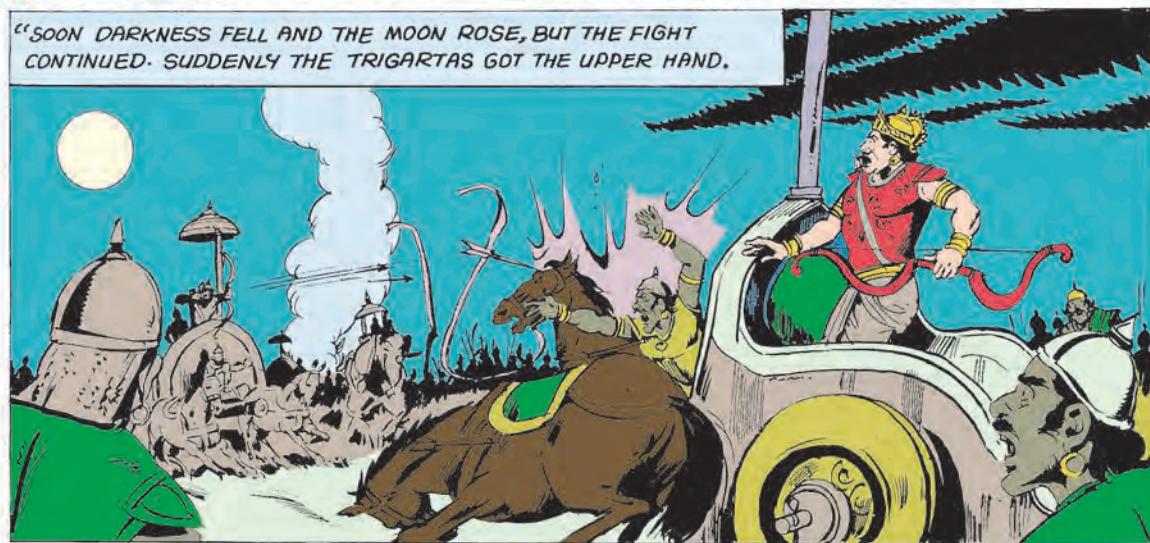
"SOON THEY CAME FACE TO FACE WITH THE KAURAVA ARMY."



"IN THE FIGHT THAT ENSUED, THE TWO ARMIES WERE EVENLY MATCHED AND NEITHER SUCCEEDED IN PREVAILING OVER THE OTHER."



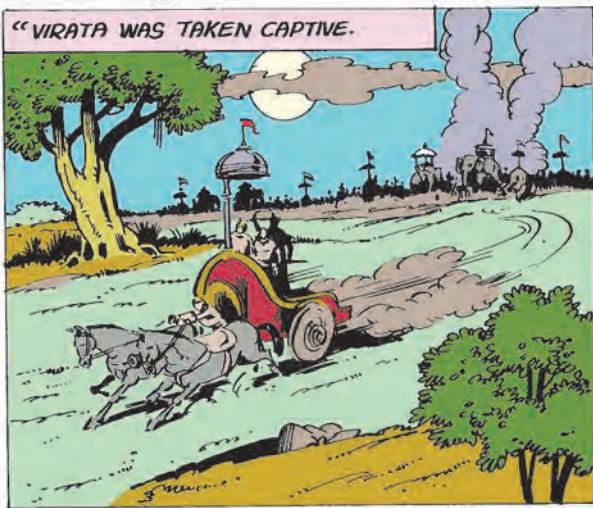
"SOON DARKNESS FELL AND THE MOON ROSE, BUT THE FIGHT CONTINUED. SUDDENLY THE TRIGARTAS GOT THE UPPER HAND."



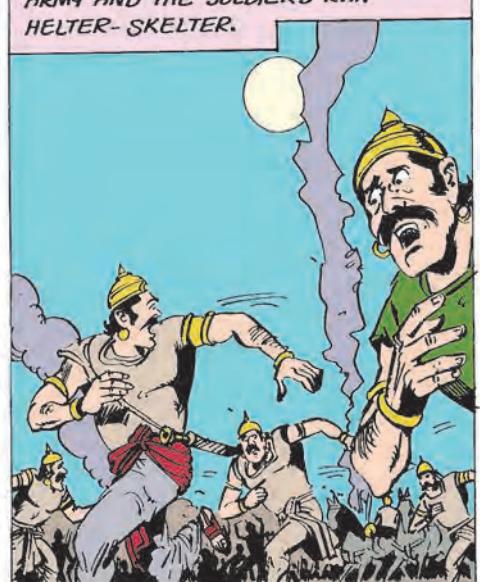
"AND SOON—



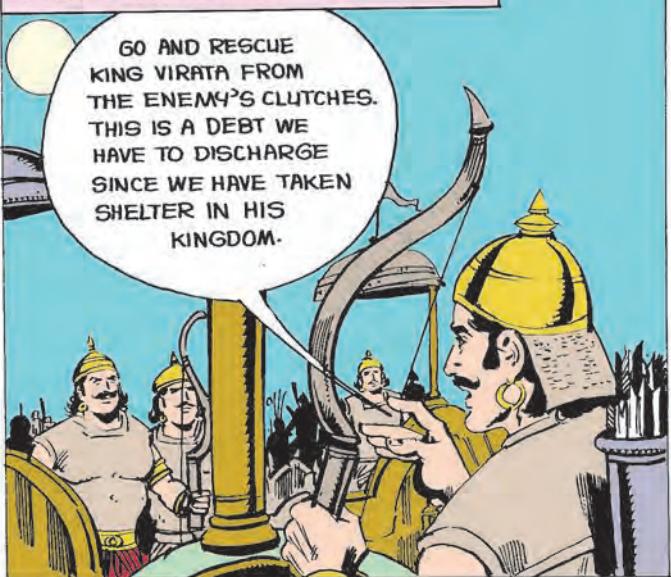
"VIRATA WAS TAKEN CAPTIVE.

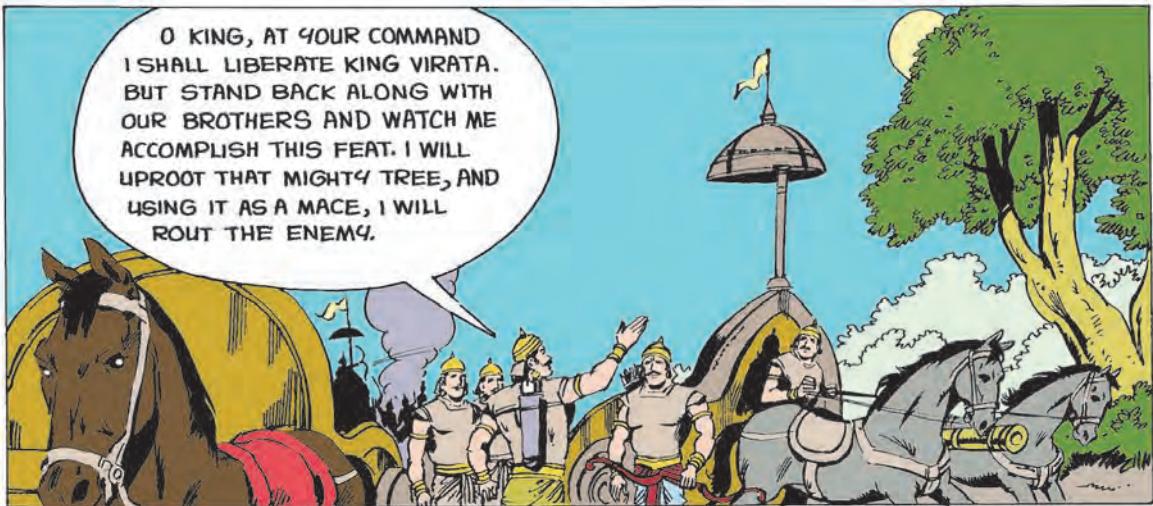


"THERE WAS PANIC IN THE MATSYA ARMY AND THE SOLDIERS RAN HELTER-SKELTER.



"SEEING THE TURMOIL, YUDHISHTHIRA ADDRESSED BHEEMA—





"BEHOLDING THE FIERCE LOOK ON BHEEMA'S FACE, YUDHISHTHIRA SAID—

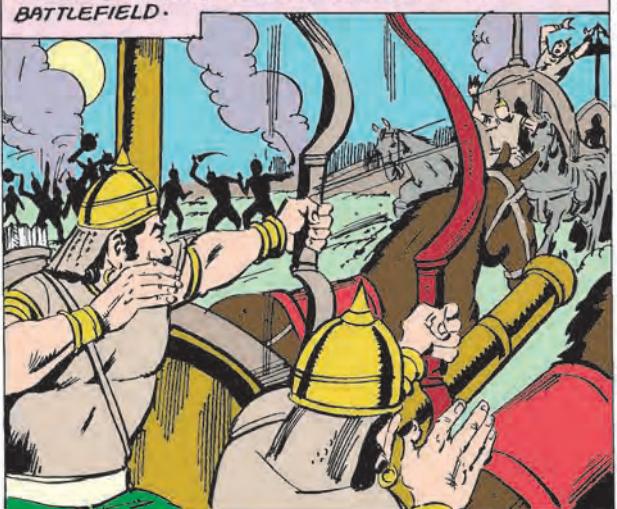
O BHEEMA, DO NOT ACT SO RASHLY. SUCH A SUPERHUMAN FEAT WOULD SURELY LEAD TO DETECTION AND PEOPLE WILL SAY — THIS IS BHEEMA!

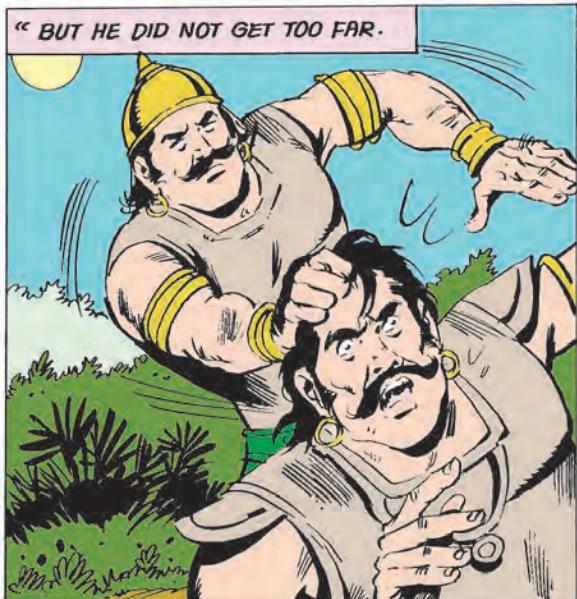
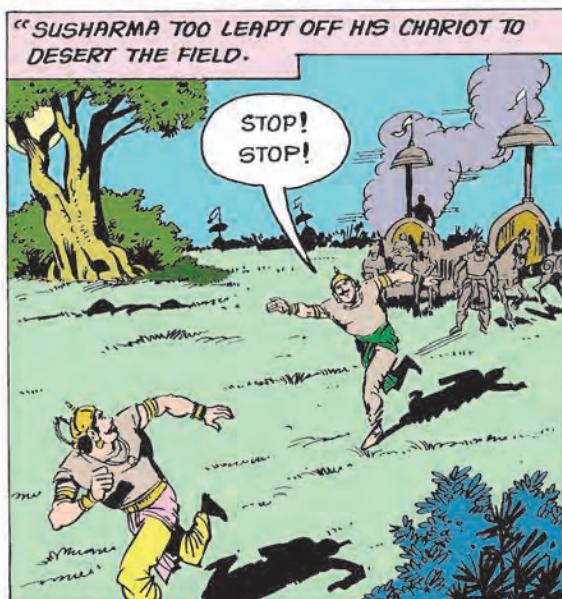
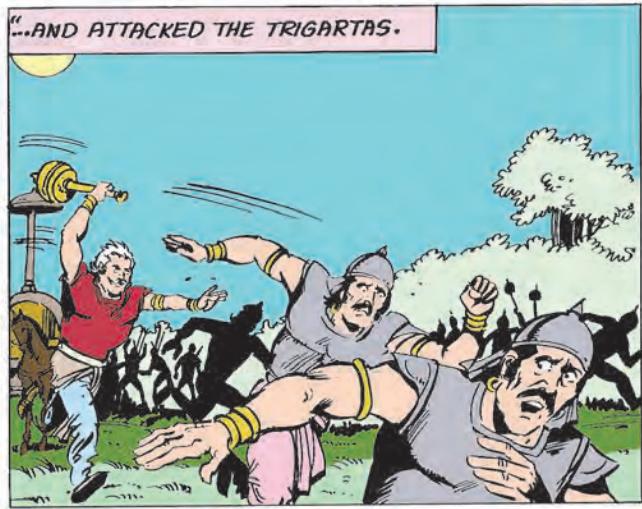
TAKE UP WEAPONS LIKE THE BOW AND ARROW, OR THE SWORD THAT ARE USED BY ALL. THEN NAKULA AND SAHADEVA WILL SHIELD THE WHEELS OF YOUR CHARIOT. GO TOGETHER, THE THREE OF YOU, AND LIBERATE KING VIRATA.

"BHEEMA THEN STARTED SHOWERING ARROWS ON THE ENEMY.

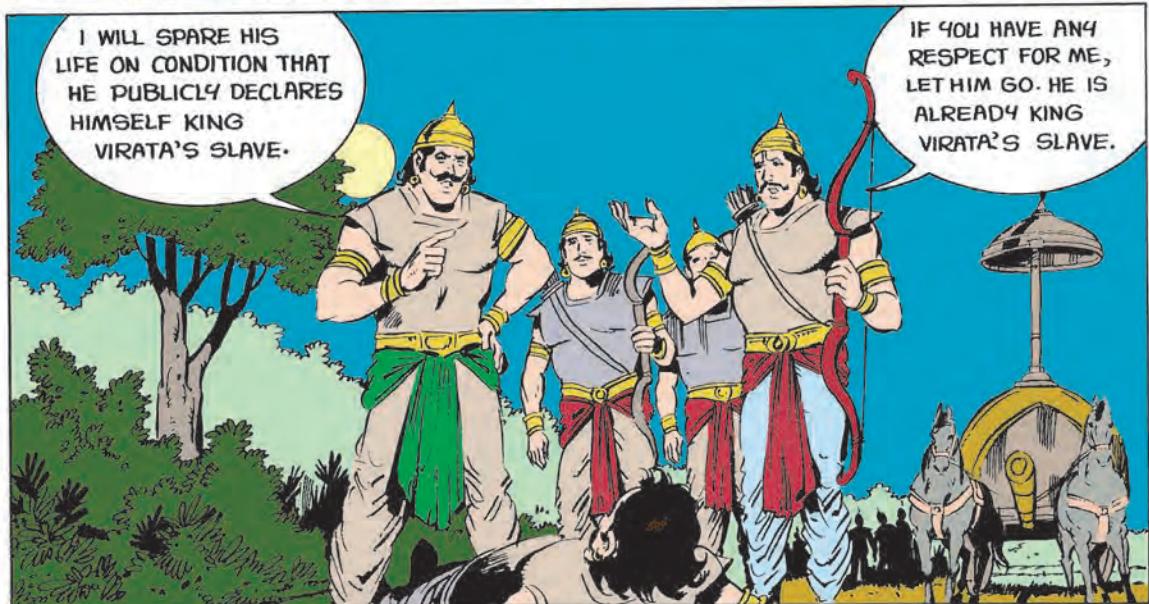
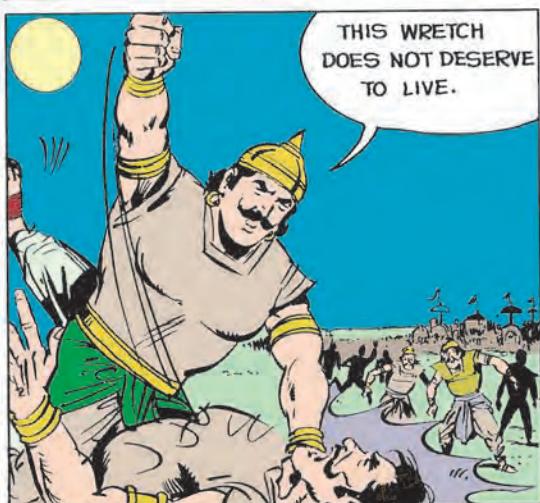
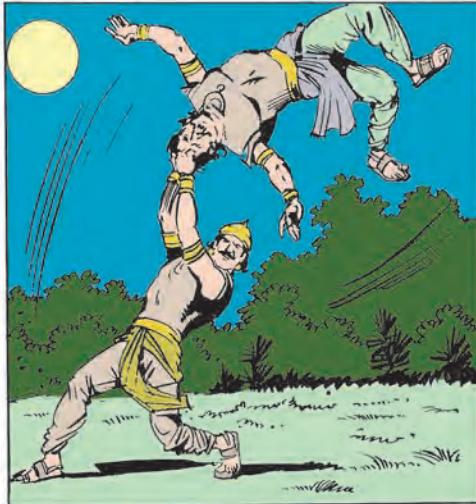


"INSPIRED BY THE ADVANCING PANDAVAS, THE FLEEING MATSYA ARMY RETURNED TO THE BATTLEFIELD.



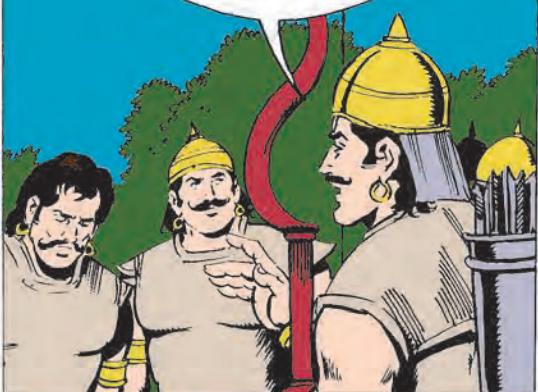


PANIC IN THE KAURAVA CAMP

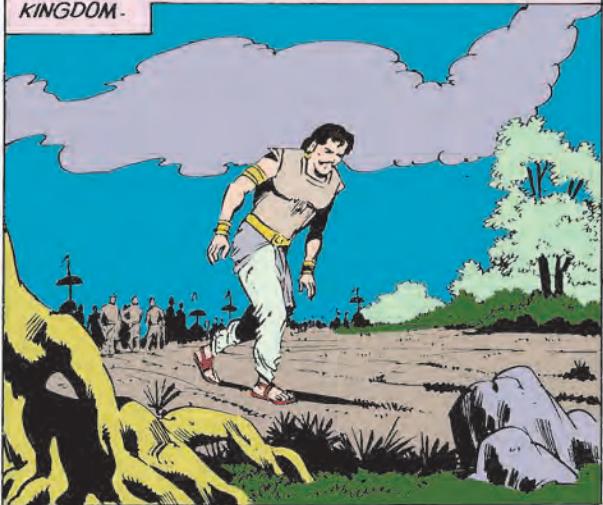


"TURNING TO SUSHARMA, YUDHISHTHIRA SAID—

GO! YOU ARE FREE. BUT REFRAIN FROM SUCH ACTS IN FUTURE.



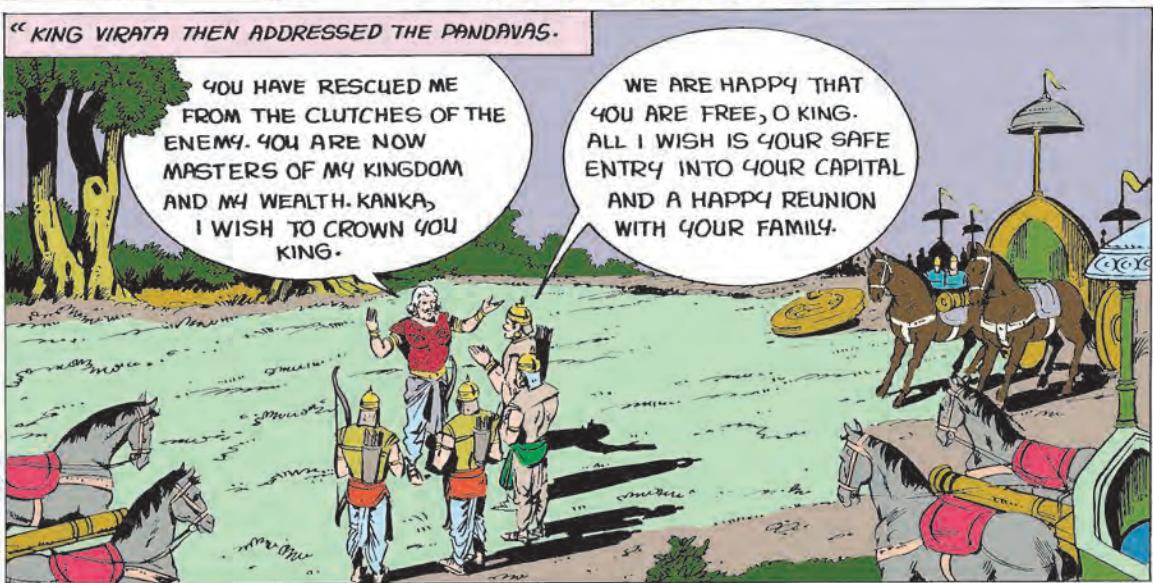
"OVERWHELMED WITH SHAME, SUSHARMA PAID HIS RESPECT TO VIRATA AND PROCEEDED TO HIS OWN KINGDOM.



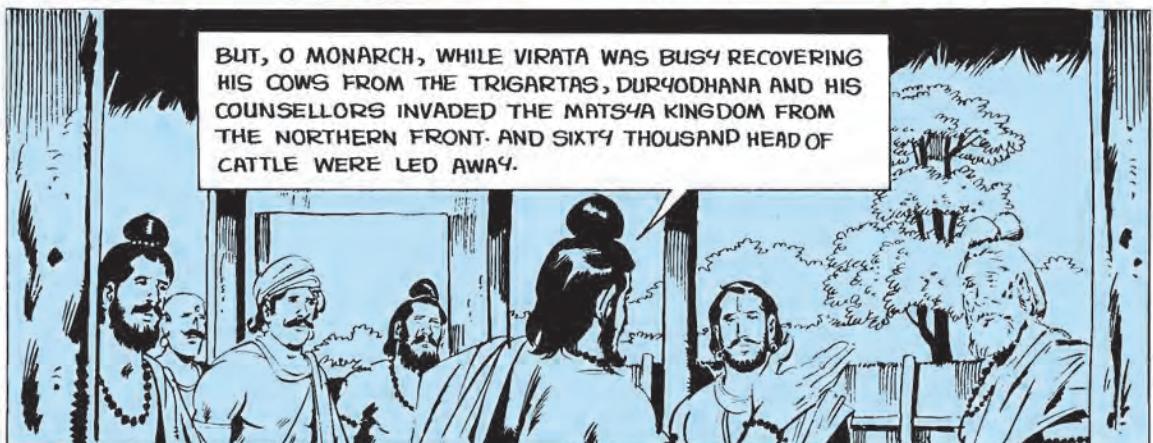
"KING VIRATA THEN ADDRESSED THE PANDAVAS.

YOU HAVE RESCUED ME FROM THE CLUTCHES OF THE ENEMY. YOU ARE NOW MASTERS OF MY KINGDOM AND MY WEALTH. KANKA, I WISH TO CROWN YOU KING.

WE ARE HAPPY THAT YOU ARE FREE, O KING. ALL I WISH IS YOUR SAFE ENTRY INTO YOUR CAPITAL AND A HAPPY REUNION WITH YOUR FAMILY.



BUT, O MONARCH, WHILE VIRATA WAS BUSY RECOVERING HIS COWS FROM THE TRIGARTAS, DURYODHANA AND HIS COUNSELLORS invaded the Matsya Kingdom from the northern front. AND SIXTY THOUSAND HEAD OF CATTLE WERE LED AWAY.

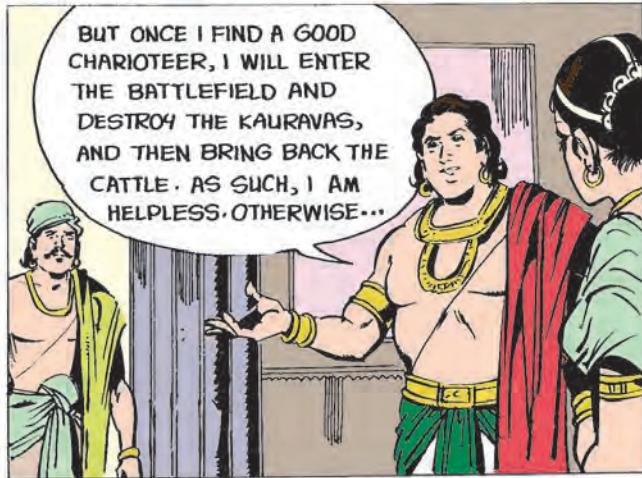


"THE CHIEF OF THE COWHERDS APPEALED TO UTTARA, SON OF KING VIRATA —

O PRINCE, YOUR FATHER ALWAYS SPEAKS OF YOU AS A GREAT WARRIOR AND A COURAGEOUS HERO. LET THE WORDS OF THE KING COME TRUE. COME, RESCUE OUR CATTLE WHICH ARE BEING LED AWAY BY THE KAURAVAS.



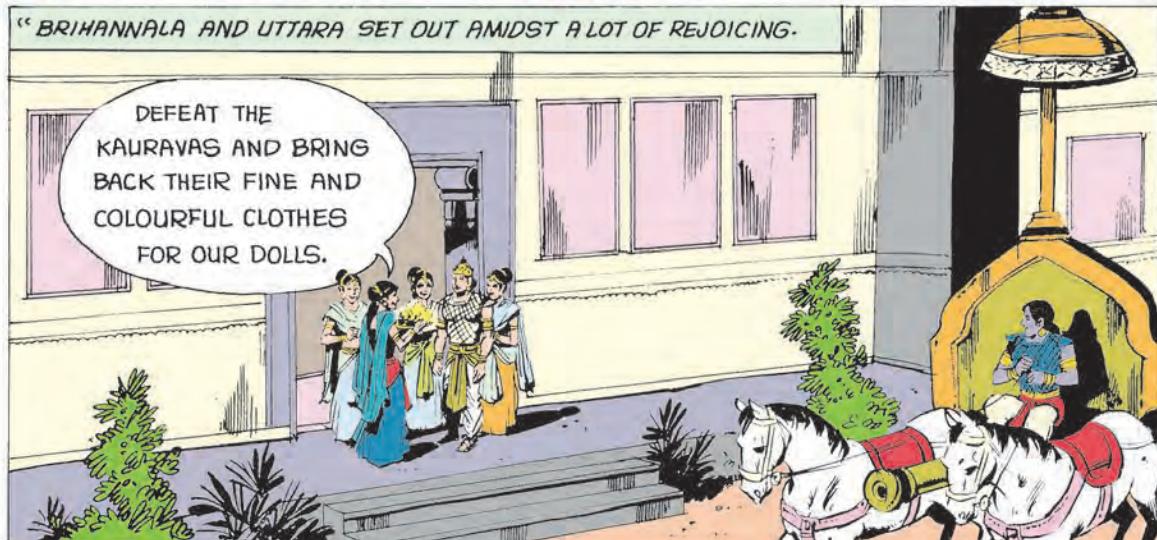
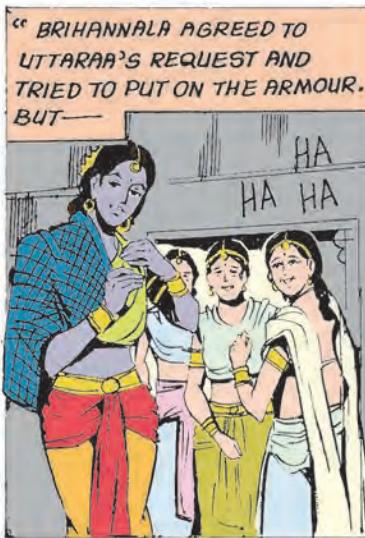
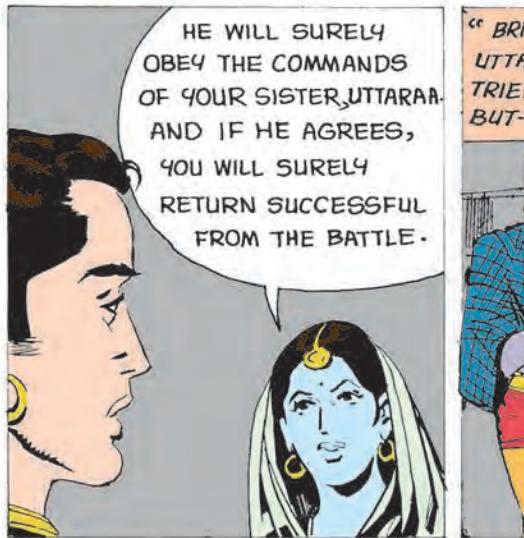
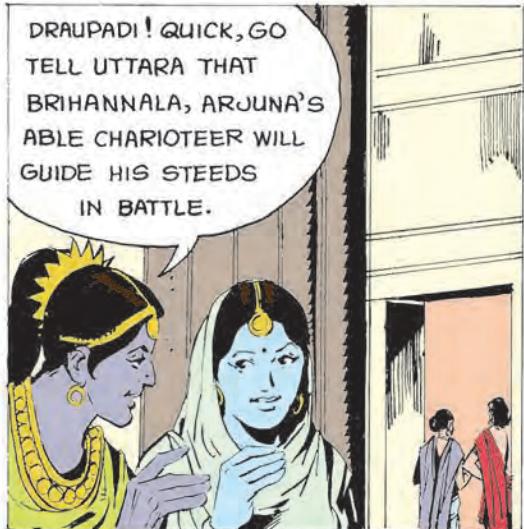
I WOULD HAVE SET OUT RIGHT AWAY IF I HAD A SKILLED CHARIOTEER TO GUIDE MY HORSES. MY OWN CHARIOTEER HAS BEEN SLAIN IN BATTLE.



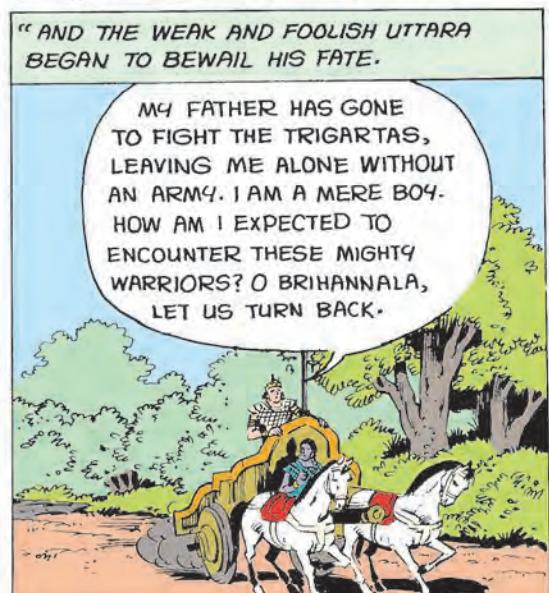
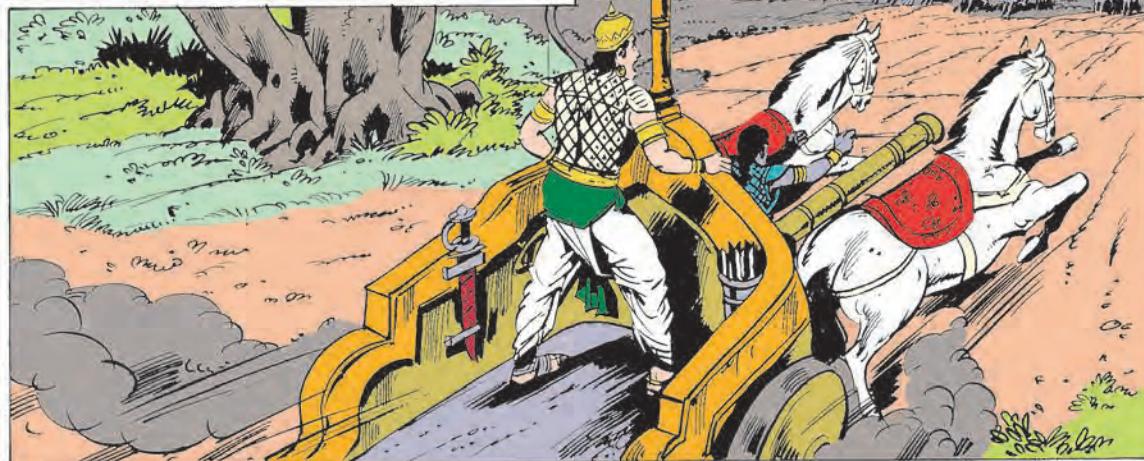
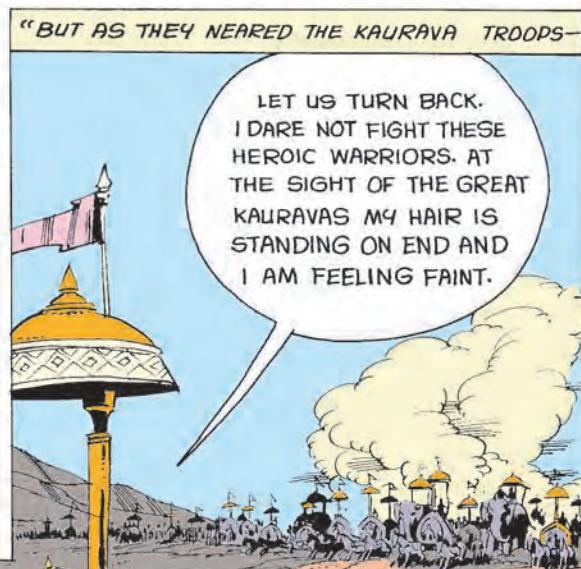
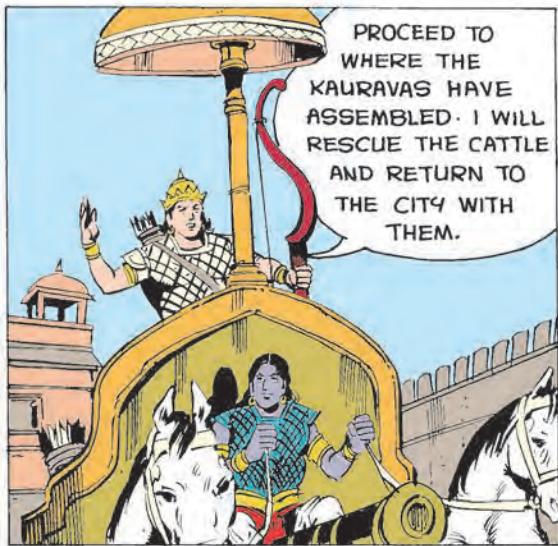
...ON SEEING MY PROWESS, THE KAURAVAS WILL SAY, IS IT ARJUNA WHO IS CAUSING US SO MUCH TROUBLE?

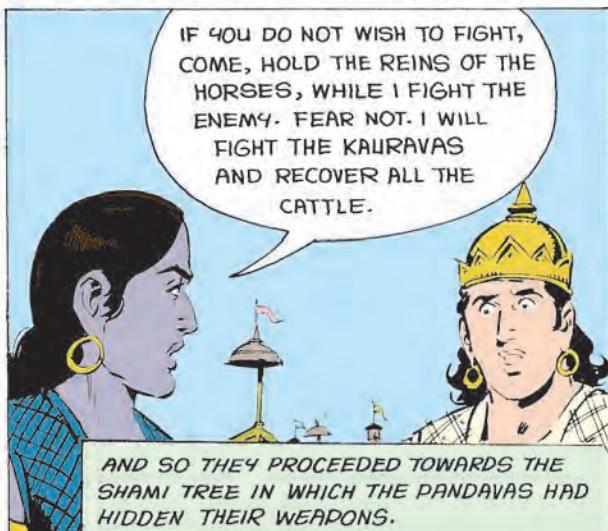
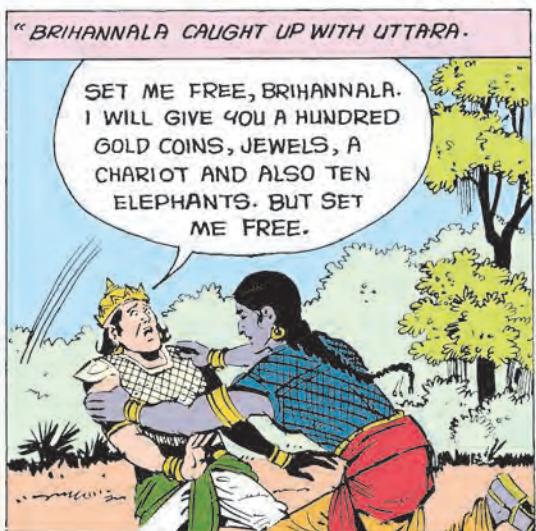
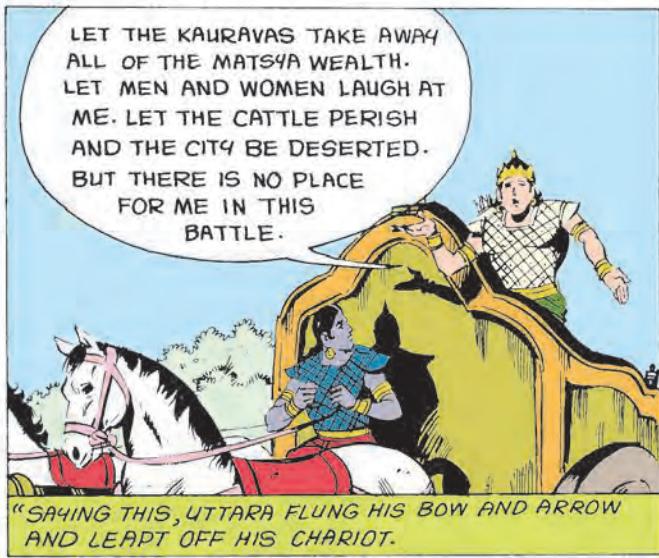
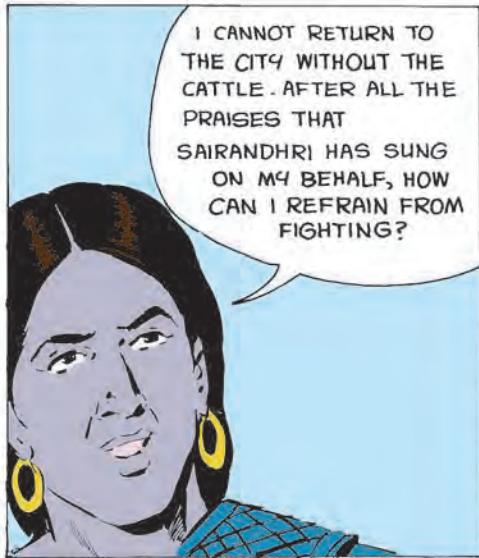


"HEARING THIS, BRIHANNALA SLIPPED OUT QUIETLY AND WENT TO DRAUPADI.



PANIC IN THE KAURAVA CAMP





"MEANWHILE IN THE KAURAVA ARMY—

WHO COULD THAT PERSON BE? HE IS DRESSED LIKE A EUNUCH, BUT HE RESEMBLES ARJUNA.

IT MUST BE ARJUNA TRYING TO GET UTTARA BACK ON THE BATTLEFIELD.

YES, IT MUST BE ARJUNA IN DISGUISE.

"BUT DRONA WAS WORRIED.

THERE ARE FIERY DRY WINDS BLOWING, THE SKY IS OVERCAST, AND THE HORSES ARE SHEDDING TEARS. ALL THIS INDICATES GREAT DANGER. BE ON YOUR GUARD, EVERYONE OF YOU. THERE IS GOING TO BE TREMENDOUS SLAUGHTER IN THIS BATTLE.

"AND TURNING TO BHEEISHMA, HE SAID—

THIS IS UNDOUBTEDLY ARJUNA DRESSED AS A EUNUCH. PROTECT DURYODHANA WHOM THE GREAT ARJUNA WILL CERTAINLY DEFEAT AND THEN TAKE AWAY THE CATTLE. I SEE NO ONE HERE WHO CAN STAND AGAINST HIM.

"HEARING THESE WORDS, KARNA SAID:

YOU ALWAYS SPEAK HIGHLY OF ARJUNA BEFORE US. BUT ARJUNA DOES NOT EQUAL EVEN A SIXTEENTH PART OF DURYODHANA OR ME.

"HOWEVER, DURYODHANA WAS ELATED.

O KARNA, IF THIS IS INDEED ARJUNA, OUR PURPOSE IS FULFILLED. FOR NOW THE PANDAVAS WILL HAVE TO GO INTO EXILE ONCE AGAIN. AND IF IT IS SOMEBODY ELSE DRESSED UP AS A EUNUCH, MY SHARP ARROWS WILL TOPPLE HIM FROM THE CHARIOT RIGHT NOW.

"MEANWHILE BRIHANNALA HAD COME TO THE SHAMI TREE IN WHICH THE WEAPONS HAD BEEN HIDDEN.

CLIMB UP THIS TREE AND BRING DOWN THE BOWS THAT ARE KEPT THERE.

WHAT BOWS?
THAT IS A CORPSE! I WILL BE DEFILED IF I TOUCH IT.

DO NOT FEAR.
YOU WILL REMAIN CLEAN AND UNPOLLUTED.
IT IS NOT A CORPSE.
IT ONLY LOOKS LIKE ONE.

"UTTARA CLIMBED UP THE SHAMI TREE AND BROUGHT DOWN THE WEAPONS.

"BUT UTTARA COULD NOT HOLD BACK HIS SURPRISE WHEN HE REMOVED THE LEAFY COVERING ON THE WEAPONS —

WEAPONS! TO WHOM DO THESE EXCELLENT WEAPONS BELONG? TELL ME TRUTHFULLY, O BRIHANNALA.

THESE WEAPONS BELONG TO THE MIGHTY PANDAVAS.

BUT WHERE ARE THE BRILLIANT SONS OF PANDU TO WHOM THESE WEAPONS BELONG? WHERE IS THEIR WIFE DRAUPADI?

"BRIHANNALA EXPLAINED TO HIM —

I AM ARJUNA.
KANKA, YOUR FATHER'S COURTIER, IS YUDHISHTHIRA AND THE COOK BALLAVA, BHEEMA.
GRANTHIKA IS NAKULA, VIRATA'S ROYAL GROOM AND TANTIPALA IS SAHADEVA IN CHARGE OF THE COW-PEN. DRAUPADI IS IN THE DISGUISE OF THE QUEEN'S SAIRANDHRI.

O ARJUNA, I AM FORTUNATE TO BEHOLD YOU. FORGIVE MY HAVING SAID UNSEEMLY THINGS TO YOU.

PANIC IN THE KAURAVA CAMP

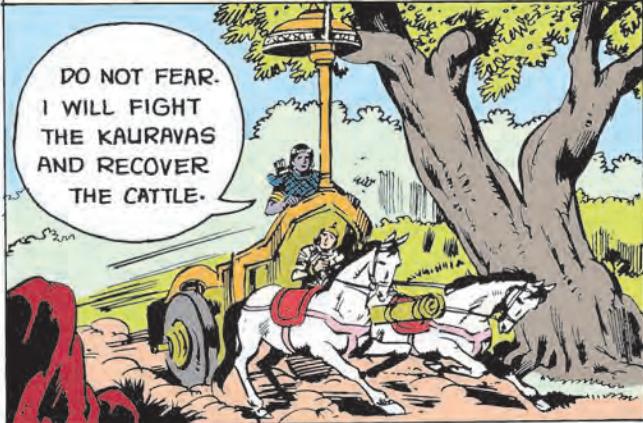
"MOUNTING THE CHARIOT, UTTARA SAID —

I AM REASSURED NOW. I WILL BE YOUR CHARIOTEER. COMMAND ME AND I WILL DRIVE YOU WHEREVER YOU WISH. GIVE ME YOUR BLESSINGS.

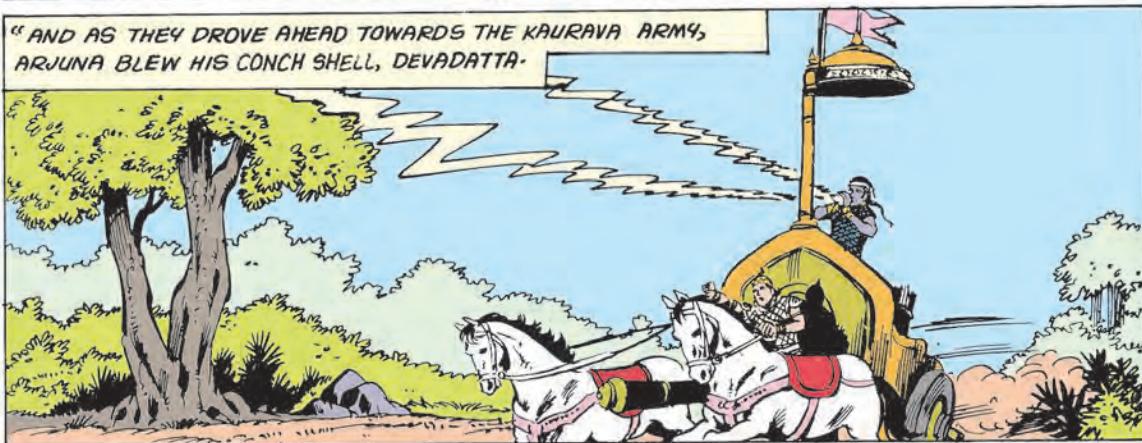


"REPLACING HIS BROTHERS' WEAPONS, ARJUNA TOOK UP HIS OWN."

"THEN HE TOOK OFF HIS BRACELETS AND WORE A PAIR OF GOLD GLOVES. TYING BACK HIS LOCKS WITH A PIECE OF WHITE CLOTH, HE GOT ON TO THE CHARIOT.

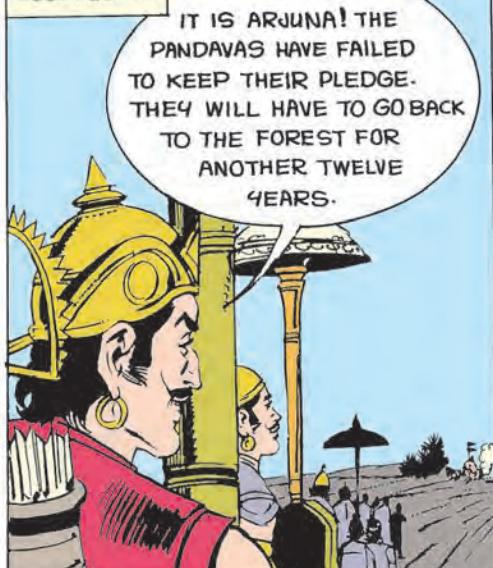


"AND AS THEY DROVE AHEAD TOWARDS THE KAURAVA ARMY, ARJUNA BLEW HIS CONCH SHELL, DEVADATTA."



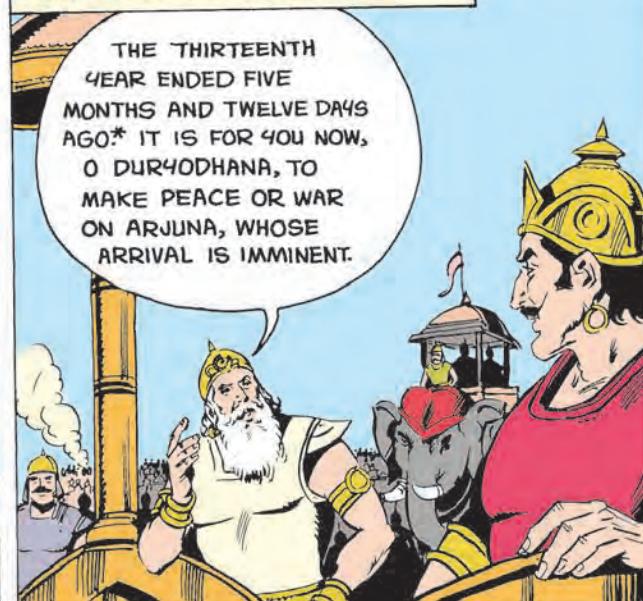
"HEARING THIS, DURYODHANA EXCLAIMED GLEEFULLY —

IT IS ARJUNA! THE PANDAVAS HAVE FAILED TO KEEP THEIR PLEDGE. THEY WILL HAVE TO GO BACK TO THE FOREST FOR ANOTHER TWELVE YEARS.

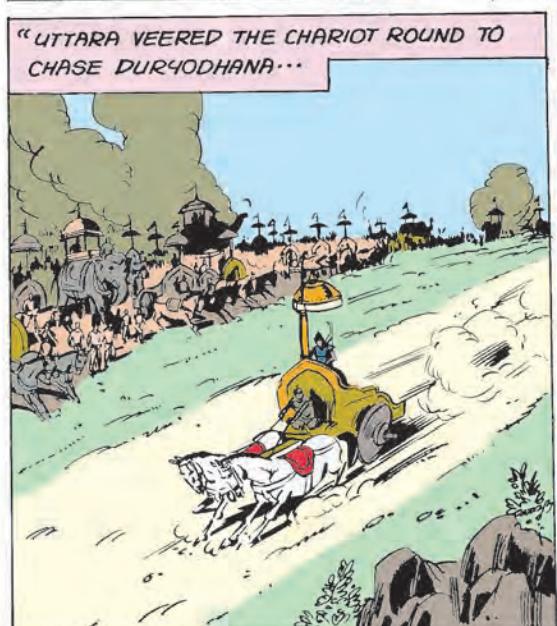
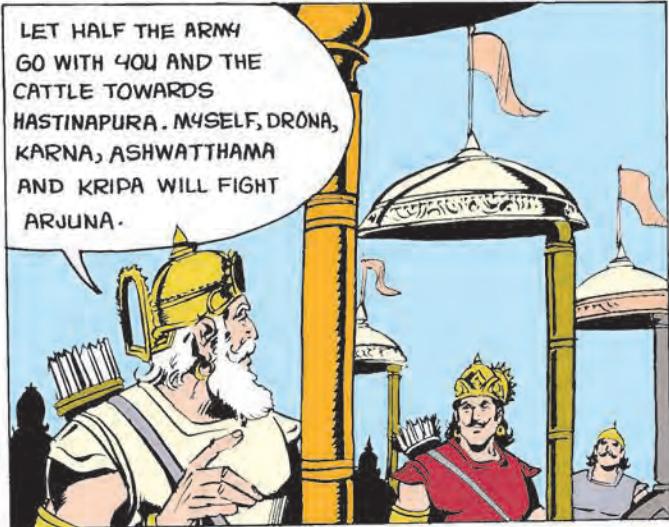


"BUT BHEESHMA INTERVENED —

THE THIRTEENTH YEAR ENDED FIVE MONTHS AND TWELVE DAYS AGO.* IT IS FOR YOU NOW, O DURYODHANA, TO MAKE PEACE OR WAR ON ARJUNA, WHOSE ARRIVAL IS IMMINENT.

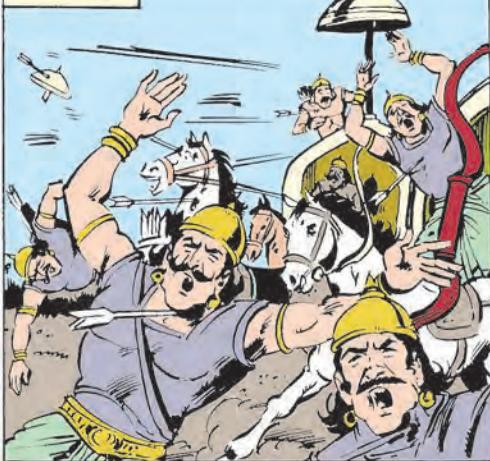


* ACCORDING TO THE LUNAR CALENDAR. EVEN ACCORDING TO THE SOLAR CALENDAR THE THIRTEENTH YEAR HAD ENDED SIX DAYS EARLIER.



PANIC IN THE KAURAVA CAMP

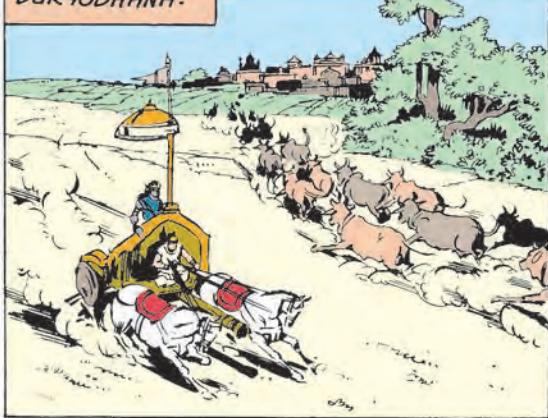
"MANY KAURAVA SOLDIERS WERE KILLED."



"AND THE CATTLE BROKE LOOSE AND RAN HELTER-SKELTER."



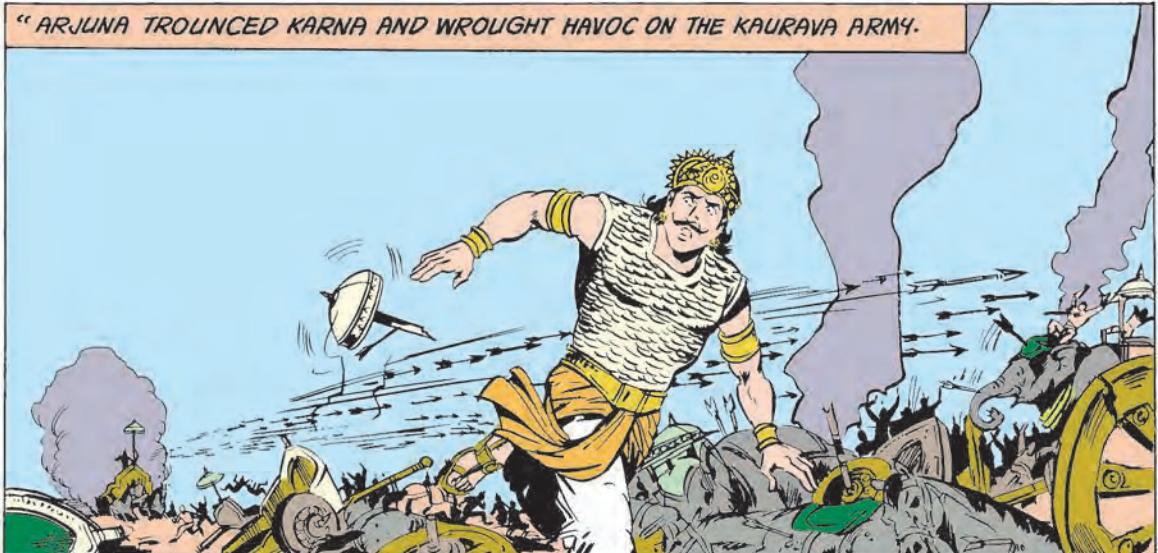
"ARJUNA DROVE THE CATTLE TOWARDS MATSYA AND THEN TOOK THE DIRECTION OF DURYODHANA."



"MEANWHILE, KARNA AND THE OTHER WARRIORS INTERCEPTED ARJUNA."



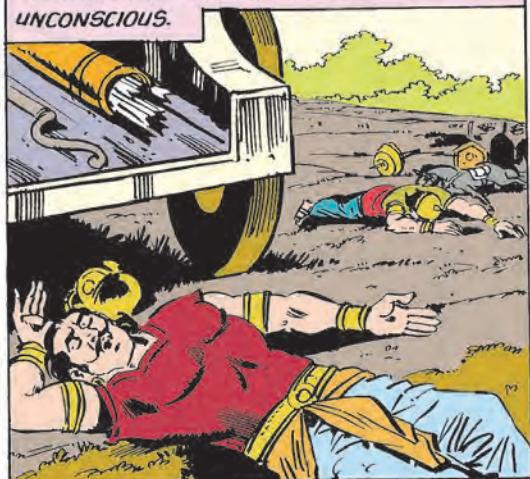
"ARJUNA TROUNCED KARNA AND WROUGHT HAVOC ON THE KAURAVA ARMY."



"HE ALSO REPULSED THE ATTACKS OF KRIPA, DRONA, ASHWATHAMA, BHEESHMA AND THE OTHERS. THE ONES DEFEATED TOOK TO FLIGHT.



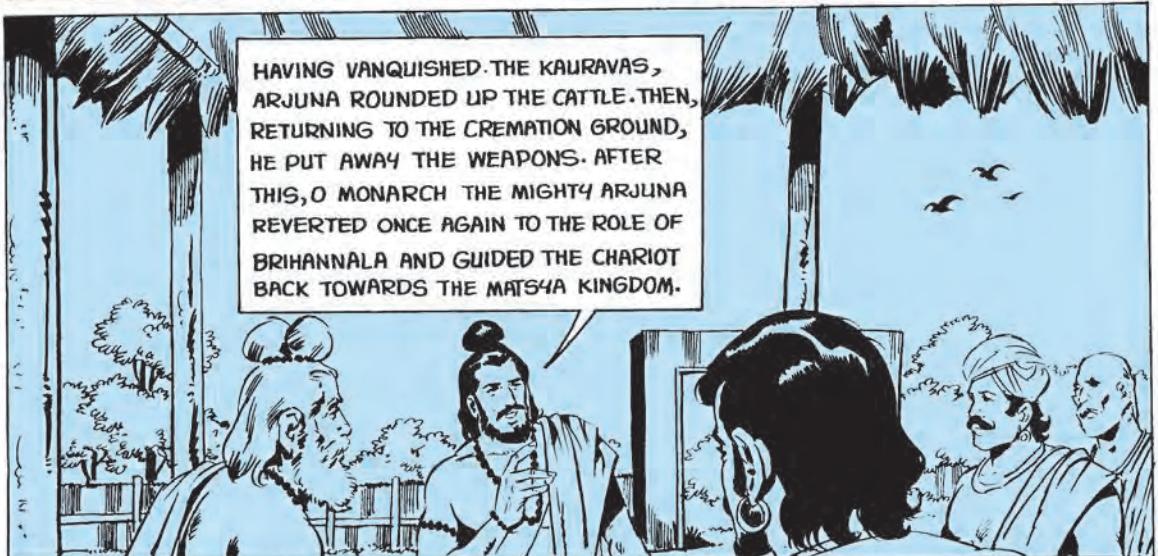
"ARJUNA THEN USED THE SAMMOHANA* WEAPON AND THE REMAINING ARMY FELL UNCONSCIOUS.



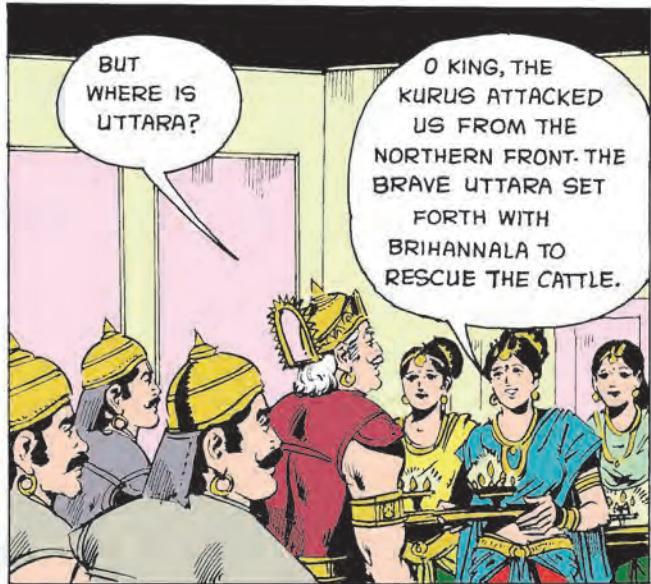
"LATER, UTTARA TOOK WITH HIM THE CLOTHES OF THE UNCONSCIOUS SOLDIERS.



HAVING VANQUISHED THE KAURAVAS, ARJUNA ROUNDED UP THE CATTLE. THEN, RETURNING TO THE CREMATION GROUND, HE PUT AWAY THE WEAPONS. AFTER THIS, O MONARCH THE MIGHTY ARJUNA REVERTED ONCE AGAIN TO THE ROLE OF BRIHANNA LA AND GUIDED THE CHARIOT BACK TOWARDS THE MATSYA KINGDOM.



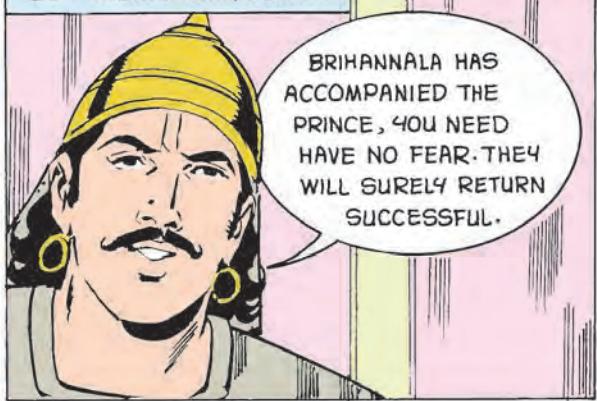
"MEANWHILE, KING VIRATA, HAVING VANQUISHED THE TRIGARTAS, RETURNED TO THE CAPITAL AMIDST GREAT REJOICING.



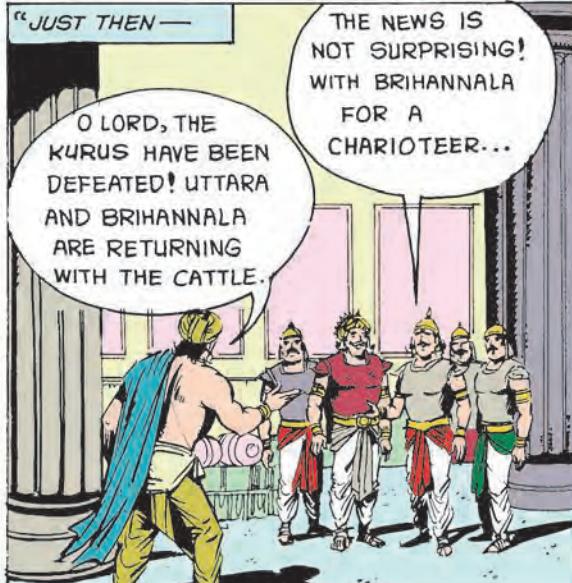
"VIRATA WAS ANXIOUS.



"BUT YUDHISHTHIRA SAID—



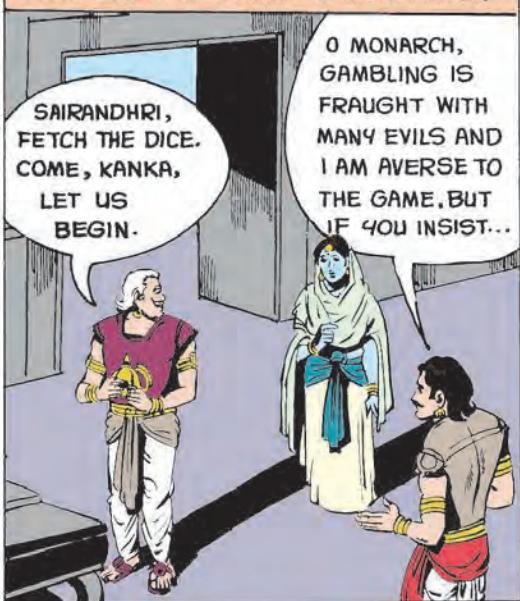
"JUST THEN—



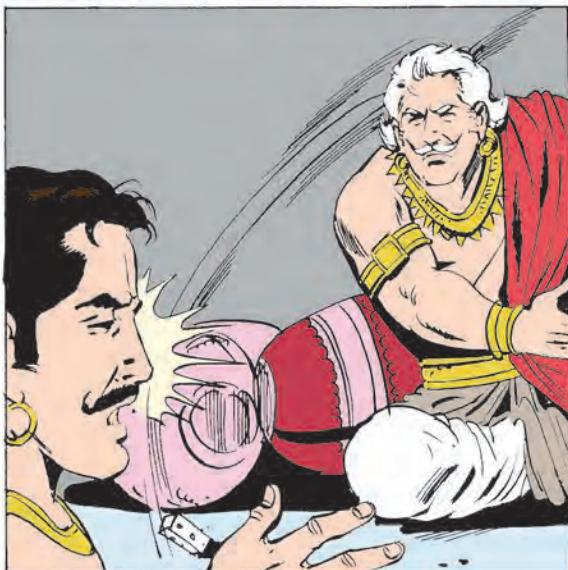
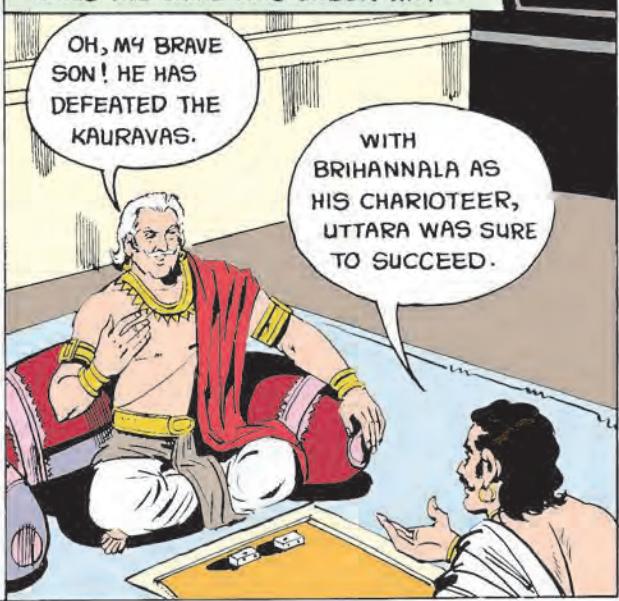
"KING VIRATA, HOWEVER, WAS OVERJOYED.



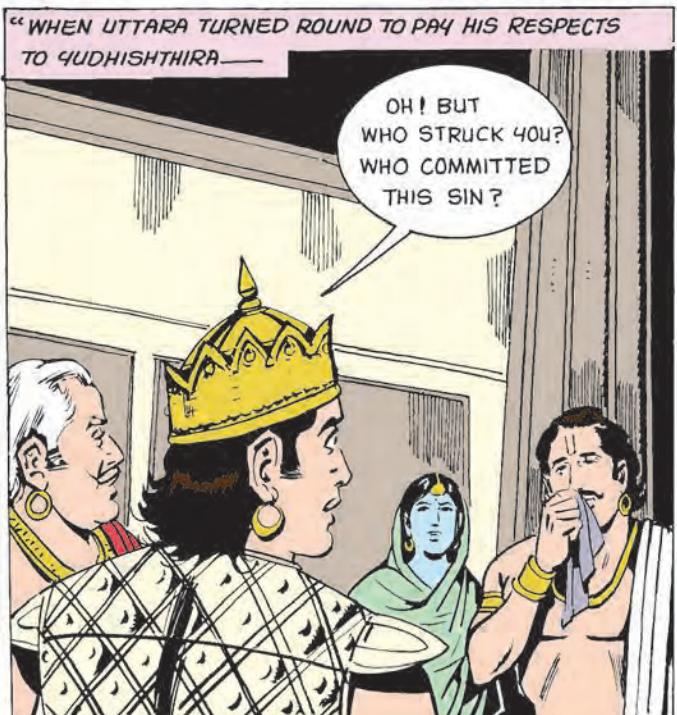
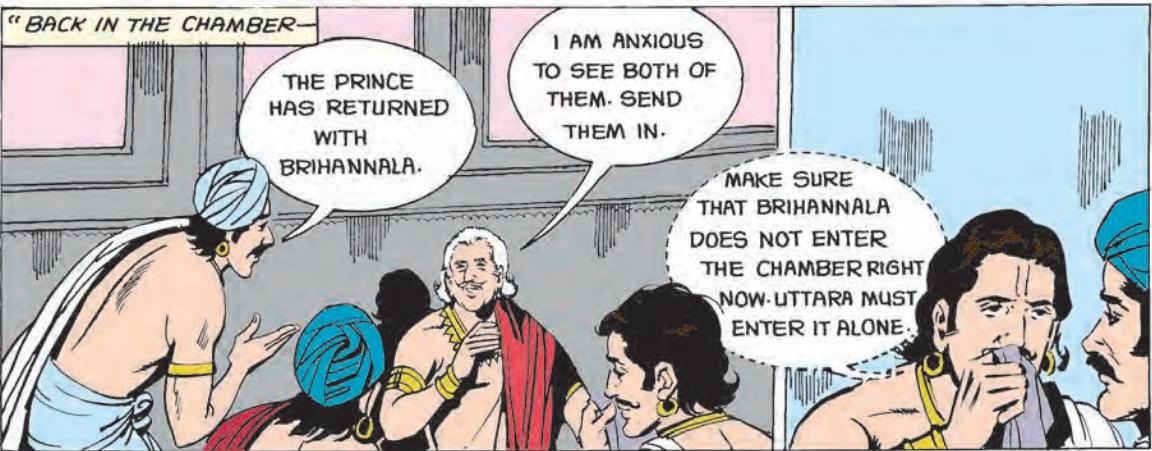
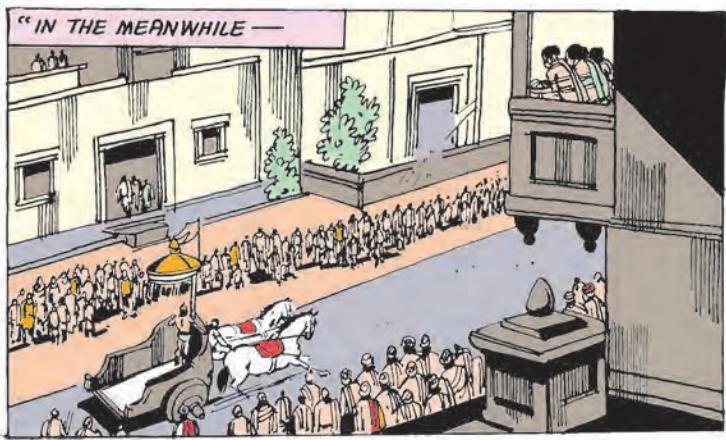
"THEN VIRATA RETURNED TO HIS CHAMBER.

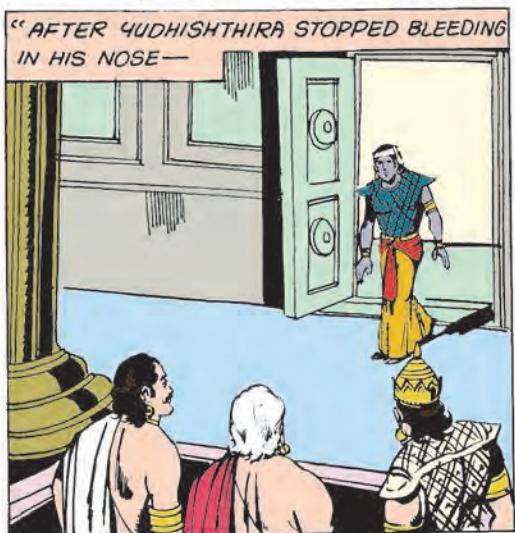
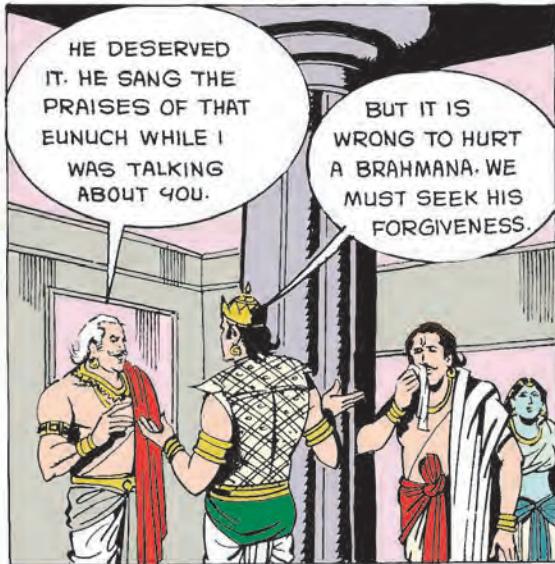


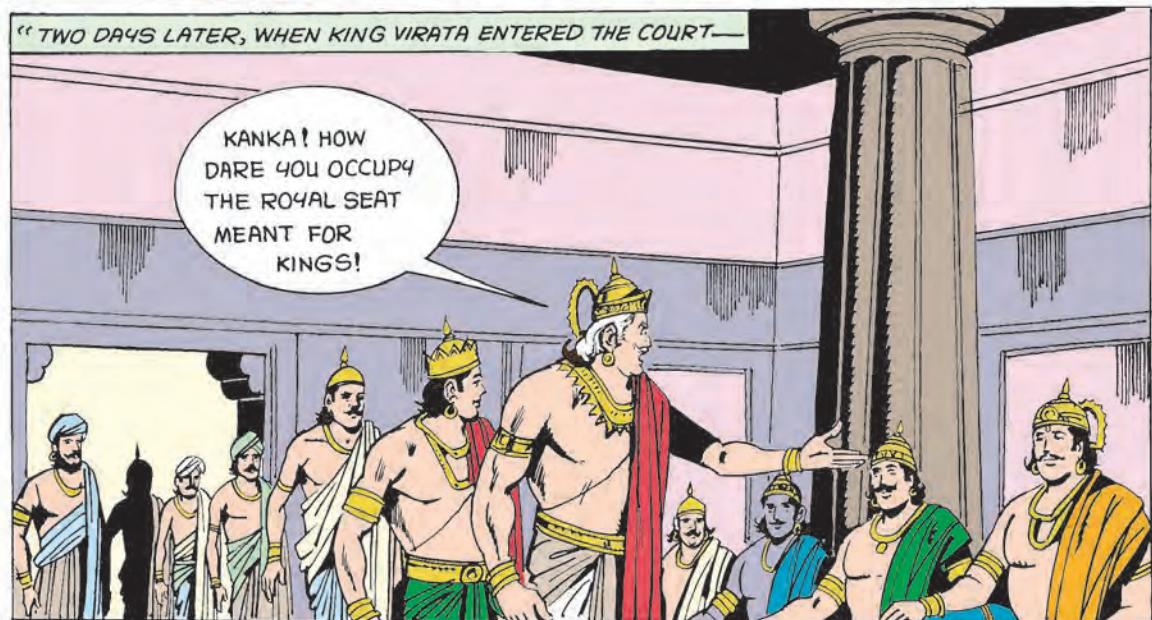
" WHILE THE GAME WAS UNDER WAY —



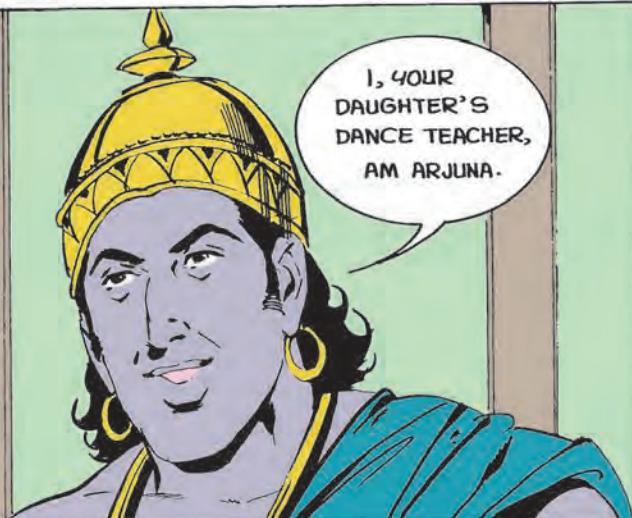
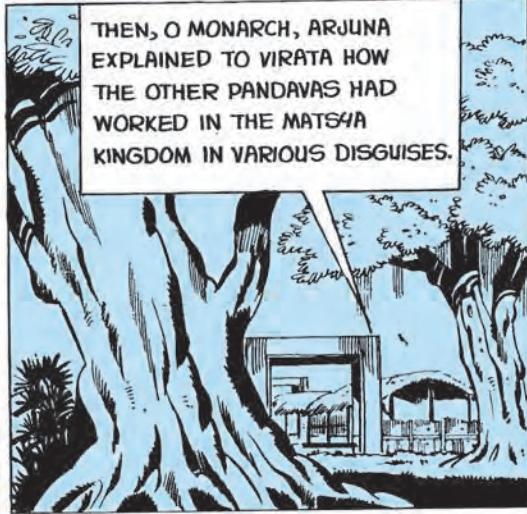
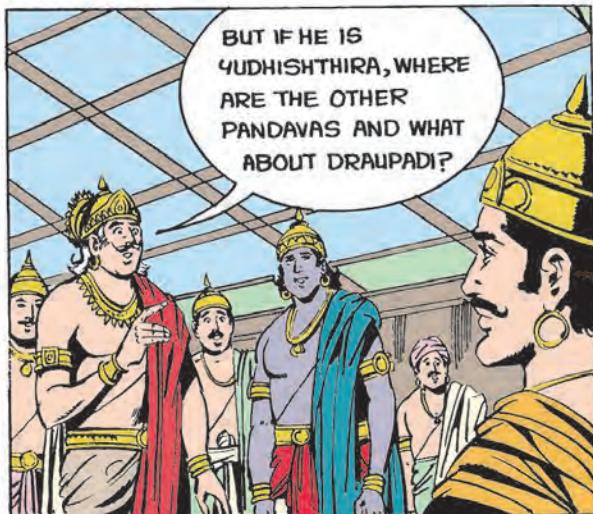
PANIC IN THE KAURAVA CAMP



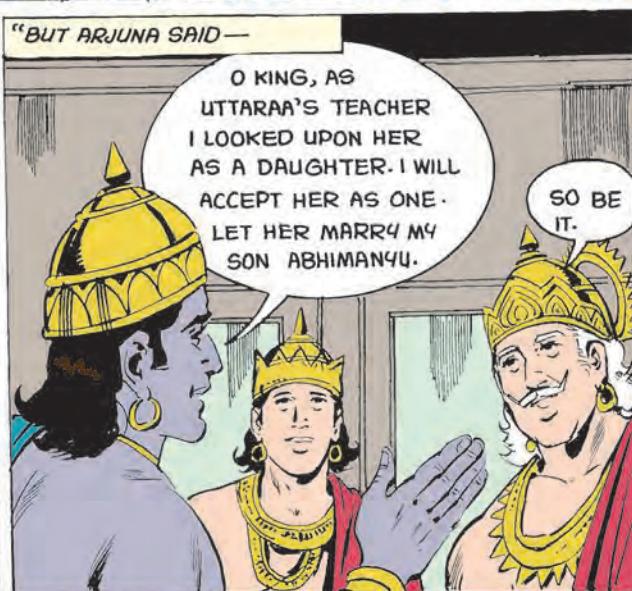
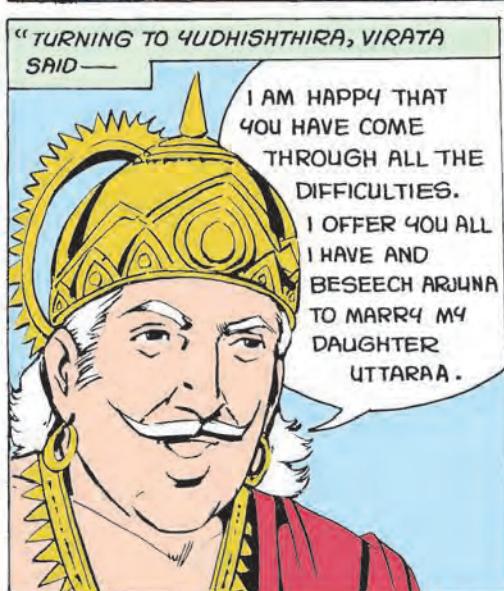
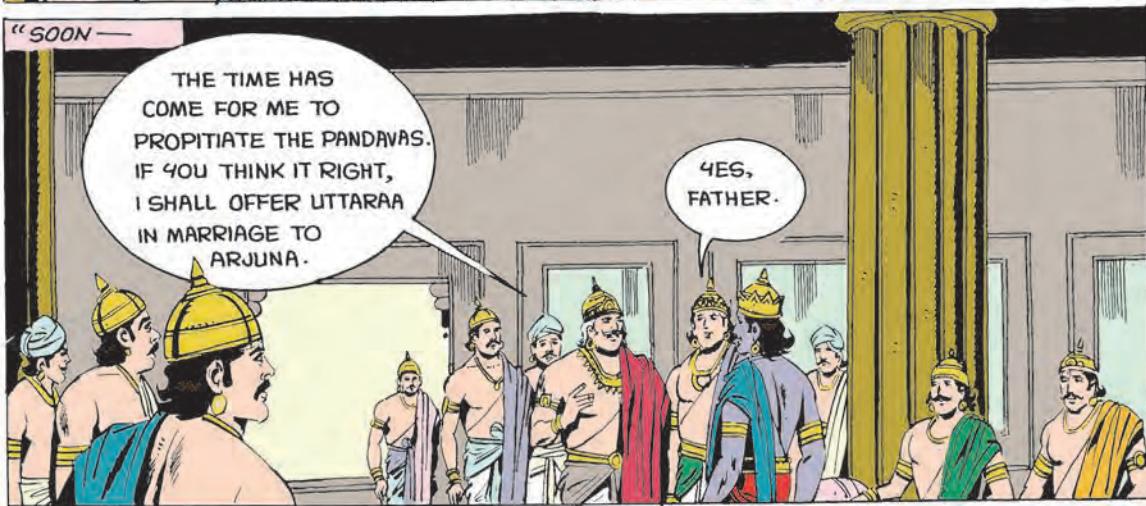
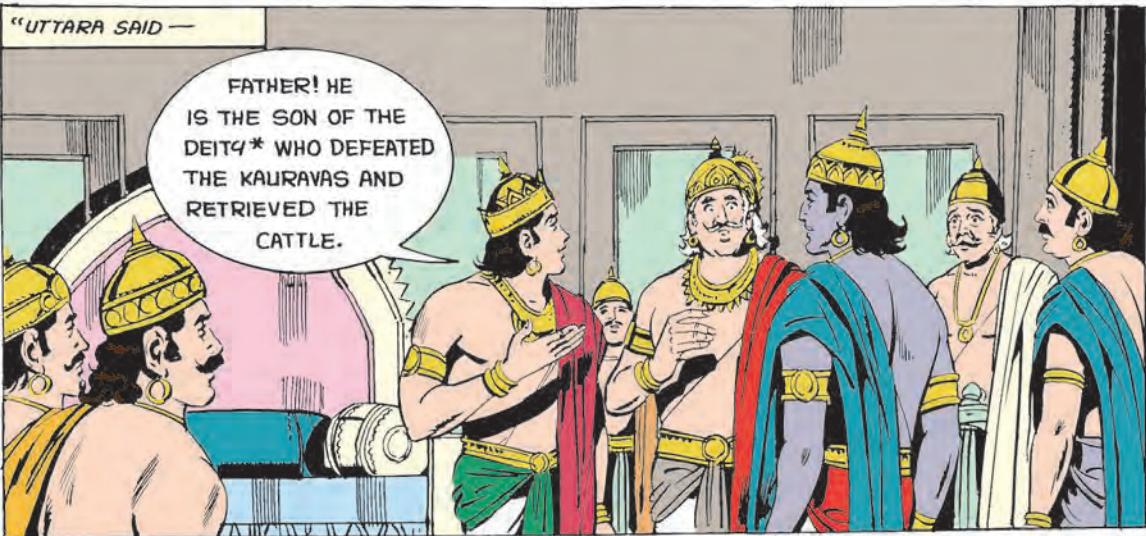




"ARJUNA ROSE AND SPOKE WITH A SMILE—

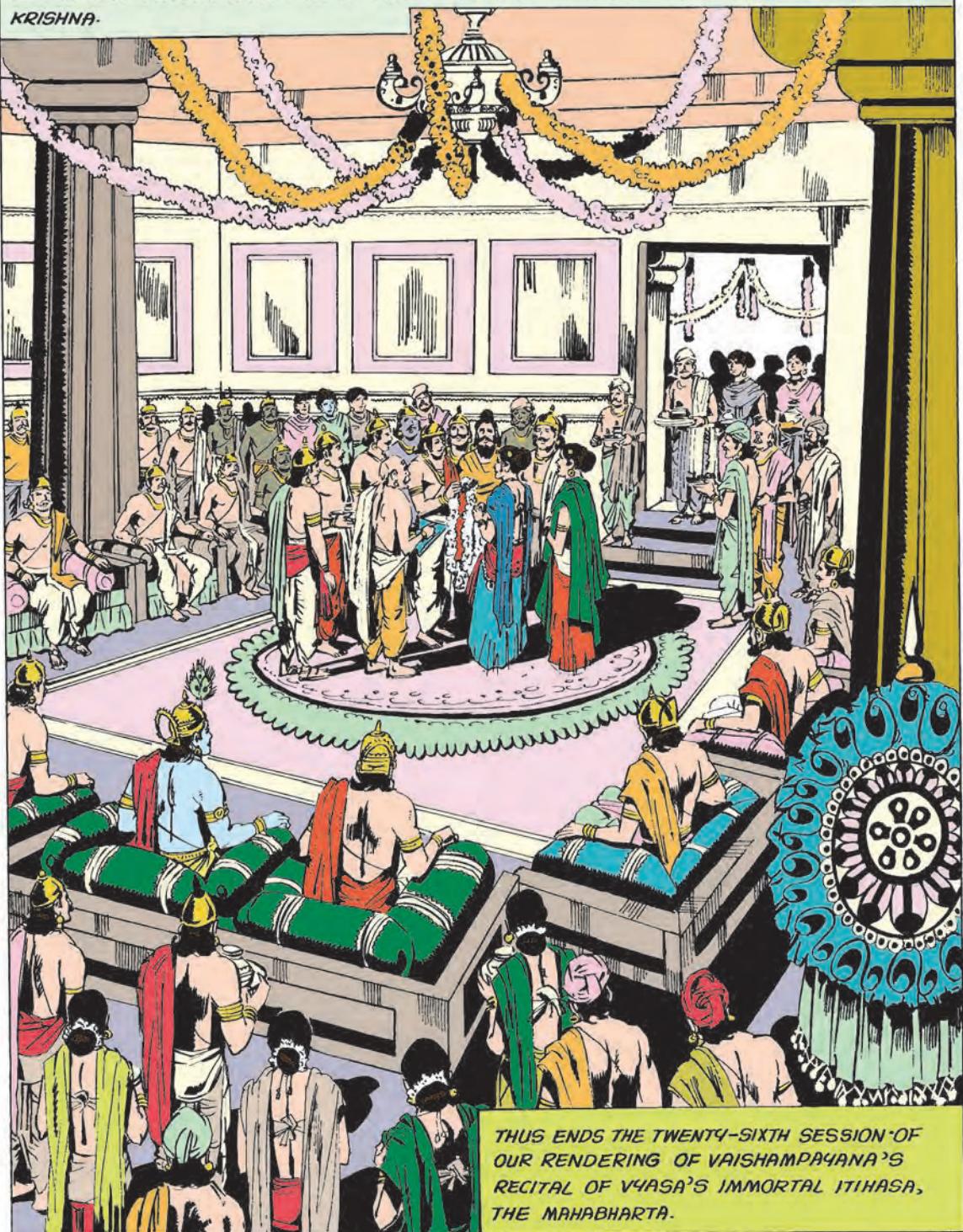


PANIC IN THE KAURAVA CAMP



* ARJUNA WAS OBTAINED BY KUNTI THROUGH THE BLESSING OF INDRA.

"THE PANDAVAS THEN TOOK UP THEIR ABODE IN THE MATSYA TOWN OF UPAPLAYYA. ABHIMANYU WAS SENT FOR. AND ON THE DAY OF THE WEDDING, GUESTS POURED IN FROM ALL DIRECTIONS. THE KING OF KASHI, THE MIGHTY DRUPADA, THE INVINCIBLE DHRISHTADYUMNA AND SEVERAL BRAHMANAS CAME. KRISHNA ALSO CAME WITH A HUGE RETINUE TO GIVE HIS BLESSINGS TO THE COUPLE. AND ARJUNA ACCEPTED UTTARA AS HIS DAUGHTER-IN-LAW IN THE PRESENCE OF KRISHNA.



THUS ENDS THE TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION OF
OUR RENDERING OF VAISHAMPAYANA'S
RECITAL OF VYASA'S IMMORTAL ITIHASA,
THE MAHABHARTA.